

**Critical Essays on the Enclosure of the Cultural Commons: The
Conceptual Foundations of Today's Mis-Education**

by

C. A. Bowers

This is an online publication of The Ecojustice Press, and may be downloaded without charge. Eugene, OR. 2007

Contents

Chapter 1 Introduction

Chapter 2 How the Linguistic Complicity of George Lakoff Supports the Market Liberal's Agenda of Enclosing What Remains of the Cultural and Environmental Commons

Chapter 3 Why the Ideas of Dewey and Freire Cannot Contribute to Revitalizing the Cultural and Environmental Commons

Chapter 4 Philosophers, the Titanic Mind-Set, and the Marginalization of the Commons—Putting Us on a Collision Course With Environmental Limits

Chapter 5 How Computers Contribute to the Enclosure of the Cultural Commons

Chapter 6 Conserving in an Era of Ecological and Political Uncertainties

Chapter 1 Introduction

Humans have been sustained by the cultural and environmental commons from the time of their first appearance on the vast savannas of what we now call Africa. The environment provided the source of food and fiber, wood for fire and shelter, and water. From the earliest times, there were norms that governed the nature of the family unit, the roles of men and women in performing various activities and ceremonies, what actions would be punished, status systems that regulated group decision-making, how the success of the hunt and later the harvest would be shared, how the dead were to be dealt with, and how young were mentored in the performance of various tasks. While the environment that was necessary for sustaining life was not referred to as the environmental commons, and while the cultural beliefs and norms that governed behavior and even led to various expressions of aesthetic judgment and performance were not referred to as the cultural commons, it is important that we make these two phrases a more central part of our thinking.

Even from the earliest times, the practices that gave the meaning of the commons its special importance-- that is, enclosure—represented the different ways people were excluded, forced to purchase what was previously freely available, and reduced to outside political control. One of the earliest uses of the vocabulary that distinguished between what is shared in common and what is enclosed can be found in the Roman Institutes of Justinian. Encoded in the law was the distinction between what is privately owned (res privatae), what is owned and thus the responsibility of the state (res publicae), and what represents the natural world common to all (res communes). The res communes was understood as including the air, wild animals, fields, forests, and the shore of the sea. As stated in Roman law, “by the law of nature these things are common to mankind”. Later in 1215, the Magna Carta re-affirmed the Roman understanding of res communes, but went further in establishing an important tradition of the cultural commons which we still rely upon today: the principle of habeas corpus that protects individuals from arbitrary arrest and imprisonment.

Today, the Digital Library of the Commons contains over ten thousand abstracts, with most of them dealing with various forms of enclosure. In recent years, a large number of these papers focus on the cultural influences on how the environmental

commons are being managed and enclosed. Words such as “cultural,” “meanings,” “metaphor,” “local knowledge,” are prominent in the titles of the papers. For example, a paper by Peter Walker and Pauline Peters is titled “Maps, Metaphors, and Meanings: Boundary Struggles and Village Forest Use on Private and Public Land in Malawi.” The question may be asked: If culture is now becoming the focus for understanding how the local environmental commons are being contested and in other ways used, why is there a need for introducing the category of the cultural commons?

The answer is quite simple. There are many aspects of the cultural commons that are being enclosed; that is, monetized, turned into commodities, privatized, lost to memory because of the silences, prejudices, and other forms of mis-education that have their roots primarily in the market liberal ideology that justifies the unlimited expansion of the industrial system of production and consumption. The cultural commons have been further undermined by the Western assumption that success in the individual’s pursuit of wealth is a sign of being among God’s chosen few. The merging of the myths of rationality and progress that were part of the legacy of Enlightenment thinkers—which scientists strengthened by their reliance upon experimental inquiry, led to thinking of traditions as constraints on progress. This view of tradition has led many people to associate different expressions of the cultural commons with backwardness—and, in the best sense, as folk practices. The possessive form of individualism, the ways in which education in the West has promoted abstract thinking over the importance of knowledge grounded in everyday cultural practices and environmental contexts, and the messianic drive to colonize the world with Western beliefs and institutions have also been major influences that have pushed the cultural commons of different communities to the margins of awareness. But the cultural commons have not disappeared—though many of the intergenerational achievements from the past, such as in the areas of civil liberties, craft knowledge and skills, and other expressions of self-reliance and mutual support—are being enclosed at an increasing rate.

Some observers might suggest that the phrase the “cultural commons” is so archaic that it is unfamiliar to most people, and that the word “community” is more easily understood. The word community encompasses many aspects of the cultural commons, as the latter includes everything that has been passed down from the past—and is still

enacted in people's lives at the taken-for-granted level of awareness. The major difference between how we now think of community and the cultural commons is that community is often understood as a geographical entity, as made up of residential areas, where the big box stores, schools and local university can be found, as well as where all the other activities that sustain the industrial approach to production and consumption are located. To most people, the word community does not carry the connotation of representing the symbolic systems that govern relationships, the legal and political processes, and the whole range of activities, skills, and mentoring activities carried on largely outside of a money economy. Nor do most references to community bring to mind the cultural assumptions, technologies, and corporate efforts to monetize what previously was available through patterns of mutual support. Indeed, many community leaders welcome the new Wal-Mart mega-stores as the expression of being a progressive, forward looking community—although some communities are realizing what is being lost. Also missing from the current use of community is an awareness of the ongoing tension between the traditions of social justice that were often the achievement of local democracy and the efforts by corporations to undermine local decision-making in order to expand markets and gain ownership and thus turn more of the cultural and environmental commons into commodities.

Students encounter discussions of community at all levels of the educational process. In the early grades they learn that communities are where people live, work, shop, and play. If and when they find themselves pursuing a university degree they can take courses in the sociology of community where they learn about various forms of discrimination, as well as courses in other departments that deal with the politics, economics, local theatre and other creative arts. Increasingly, they will find courses that focus on environmental issues, such as how to restore local wetlands and to challenge the local industrial polluters. The problem with the current way in which community is studied is that in most public schools students are presented with the idea that community is the arena for various human activities. What is missing from these discussions and descriptions is that community also includes the animals, plants and other elements of the bioregion. That is, students acquire the anthropocentric view of community that makes it difficult to view the environment in any other way than as a natural resource. University

classes that have an environmental and scientific focus correct for this bias, but tend to ignore the nature and importance of the local cultural commons as providing intergenerationally proven examples of many human activities that do not adversely impact the environment.

What is being ignored in public schools and universities about the importance of the cultural commons is also ignored in two recent films. The Corporation, and Al Gore's film, An Inconvenient Truth. The Corporation introduces the viewer to the history of the corporation, from the time when it was understood as a legal entity created for the purpose of carrying out a specific project, with no legal status beyond that point, to when it became understood as having the same characteristics and legal rights of an individual. The socially and environmentally disruptive impact of the corporation's unrelenting pursuit of increased market share and profits is documented, as well as the legal gains corporations have made in being able to patent nearly every aspect of life, including the genes themselves. What is missing from the film is a discussion of how corporations are undermining the cultural commons—and the fact that the world's diversity of cultural commons represents sites of resistance to economic globalization. The film ends with the suggestion that people need to become more informed about the dangers poised by the politically and morally unrestrained world of corporate culture. Not mentioned are the many ways in which the growing power of corporations can be challenged by replacing dependence upon consumerism with greater dependence upon the resources, activities and mutual support systems of the local cultural commons.

Gore's film and book, which have the same title, is further evidence that people who have gone through the educational system, including elite universities, have been badly mis-educated. After readers encounter the scientific evidence that global warming is occurring at a rate that will alter life for most of the world's population readers are encouraged to reduce consumerism by adopting the following practices. These include buying things that last, putting groceries in a reusable tote bag, consuming less meat, buying local, learning about climate change, voting with your dollars, and supporting environmental groups. The virtue of these recommendations is that they do not require deep reflection about why most people accept so readily the values and assumptions that lead to thinking that consumerism is the source of happiness and a sign of patriotism.

Gore's recommendations assure them that reducing their level of consumerism will require no fundamental changes in their way of thinking and values—which will, in turn, ensure their continued reliance on what is industrially produced and the media dictated trends of what is fashionable. The use of a reusable tote bag will serve as a visible sign of their concern about reducing the causes of global warming, even as they drive away in oversized sports utility vehicles. That there are community-centered alternatives to meeting many of the needs of daily life through consumerism is not mentioned because Gore and the men and women who collaborated in producing the film and book reproduce the silences about the nature of the cultural and environmental commons that were part of their university experience. Unfortunately, the book sends the wrong message about how to reduce consumerism, which is unfortunate since the film and book are being taken seriously in various parts of the world. Given the efforts of corporations to increase demand for a consumer dependent lifestyle in countries such as India, China, and other heavily populated regions of the world, Gore missed an opportunity to identify how renewing many of the non-monetized traditions within these countries might lead to a better balance between consumerism and what the local ecosystems can sustain. The book's scientific documentation of global warming is likely to reinforce the idea that the same careful and evidence-based thinking went into the recommendations for reducing consumerism.

Anyone who has read the accounts of receding glaciers and changing weather patterns that are threatening the source of water for hundreds of millions of people, of extreme weather systems that the insurance industry and public safety officials now take seriously, and the consensus predictions of scientists about the dire changes our children and grandchildren will face, should be aware that the old patterns of thinking, including the cultural assumptions that are still taken-for-granted, must now be questioned. That is, the tipping point also has implications for whether we will recognize the mistakes of our hubris-driven past, as well as how the intergenerational achievements of the past have been marginalized because they did not fit with the assumptions of a modernizing and economically-oriented culture. Three recent books, including two online books, [Renewing the Commons: University Reform in an Era of Degraded Democracy and Environmental Crises](#) (2006), and [Transforming Environmental Education: Making the](#)

Cultural and Environmental Commons the Focus of Educational Reform (2006), provide an introduction to identifying many aspects of the cultural commons—including how different traditions of the local cultural commons can be introduced into the curriculum from the early grades through university level classes. The main focus of these earlier books identified the different characteristics of the cultural commons that often are unrecognized by most people because the cultural commons often are part of taken-for-granted experience. The different ways in which the enclosure of the cultural and environmental commons is occurring, and how these patterns of enclosure can be introduced in the curriculum at different levels of formal education are given brief attention. However, little attention is given to the historical forces that have contributed to why many people ignore how the traditions of individual and community self-sufficiency and mutual support are being replaced by experts and products that have to be purchased.

The essays in this collection represent an effort to bring the past into the discussion of modern forms of enclosure. Much of the intellectual history of how past ways of thinking continue to influence the present already has been done by scholars who have a much deeper knowledge than I possess. However, most of this scholarship was done before there was an awareness of the ecological crises and the current efforts to globalize the consumer lifestyle that is accelerating the rate of environmental degradation. Most of it was done by scholars who were educated to the same Enlightenment and modernizing biases that continue to marginalize the importance of the cultural commons. Although these scholars have given little attention to how different cultural commons generally have a smaller ecological impact, they have addressed the more destructive traditions, such as racism, exploitation, and discriminatory practices. But these important efforts were not conceptualized as being part of the cultural commons; rather they were understood from a more sociological point of view where social class, and political, economic, and educational discrimination were the main focus.

In order to understand the conceptual and moral basis of different forms of enclosure I focus on how the metaphorical nature of language continues to reproduce many of the misconceptions of the past—misconceptions that continue to reinforce the long held silences that ensure there will be little or no resistance to the loss of traditions

of self-sufficiency and even our civil liberties. In effect, what ties the essays in this collection together is how the language of different thinkers, ranging from Plato, Descartes, Locke, Dewey, George Lakoff, and today's advocates of computer-based learning, have contributed to the silences, prejudices, and just basic misconceptions about the cultural commons that are being reproduced by today's supposedly pre-eminent thinkers, professors, and average citizens. Whether there is a casual connection between what their respective vocabularies illuminated and hid and today's distinction between high and low status knowledge, or simply an interesting correspondence, will require further investigation. What is certain is that the silences concerning the cultural commons, as well as the ethnocentrism, that are such prominent features in the thinking of these philosophers and political theorists are also reproduced in most of the academic disciplines—and thus in the thinking of generations of university graduates.

The first essay examines how George Lakoff's theory on how to use language to control the frame that governs political discourse is complicit in reinforcing the market driven forces that are major contributors to the ecological crises. What he overlooks is that words such as liberalism and conservatism have a history, and that their current use today still carries forward the cultural assumptions and analogic thinking of the early theorists. While generally agreeing with Lakoff's social justice agenda, I criticize him for not recognizing that if we accept his use of the word conservatism as referring to institutes, corporations, and politicians working to expand the free enterprise system, while reducing the responsibilities of government, then it is more difficult to recognize that environmentalists and the people working to support what remains of the cultural commons are the genuine conservatives. Without a knowledge of the history of language, it becomes more difficult to recognize the Orwellian use of language—and the slippery political and ecological slope that lies ahead when the loss of civil rights and government collusion with corporations are referred to as the expression of conservatism.

The essay on the language of John Dewey and Paulo Freire brings out how their respective ideas that there is one-true approach to knowledge (experimental inquiry for Dewey, and critical inquiry for Freire) contributes to the limited vocabulary of their world-wide following. Their vocabularies, and the cultural assumptions they are based upon, perpetuate the ethnocentrism, the Social Darwinian thinking of the nineteenth

century, and the silences about both the ecological crises –as well as the way in which many of the world’s cultural commons represent alternatives to today’s environmentally destructive hyper-consumerism. The essay also points out that their approaches to knowledge, which they viewed as essential for all cultures to adopt, lacked an awareness that critical reflection needs to take account of how the misconceptions of the past are encoded in the language they relied upon in formulating their prescriptions for a progressive and emancipated existence. The essay also identifies the silences in their theories—the most important being an awareness of the cultural practices of their day that were degrading the environment, as well as what needs to be conserved as sources of resistance to the forces promoting consumerism and an industrial process that undermines local skills and mutual support systems.

The main focus of the third essay is on how the vocabularies of important philosophers beginning with Plato, and including Rene Descartes, John Locke, Adam Smith, John Stuart Mill, and Herbert Spencer, have influenced today’s taken-for-granted ways of thinking. The specific concern is how the prejudices, ethnocentrism, and emphasis on the high-status nature of abstract knowledge promoted in universities may have their roots in the language of these Western theorists. None of these theorists were aware of the different cultural approaches to knowledge—and the connections between these knowledge systems and the bioregions that shaped them. And none of them were aware of the possibility of overshooting the sustaining capacity of natural systems, which caused many of the ancient and pre-modern cultures to collapse—to use Jared Diamond’s metaphor. While I do not attempt to prove a causal connection, I do point out that the silences, prejudices toward different approaches to knowledge, and the indifference to environmental limits have been a major characteristic of how philosophy and political theory have been and still are being taught in most universities.

The fourth essay introduces a series of questions about the forms of knowledge, relationships, and activities (such as mentoring) that cannot be digitized—and thus transformed into abstract representations that strengthen the hegemony of the industrial culture. In addition to explaining the many ways in which computer-based communication and thinking contribute to the current global project of colonization to a Western way of thinking and lifestyle, the essay raises the issue of whether computers

facilitate or impede the ability of classroom teachers and university professors to mediate between the two cultures that students live in—namely, the cultural commons they depend upon without being explicitly aware of, and the culture of consumer and market dictated trends. This essay explains how helping students recognize the advantages and disadvantages of different aspects of the cultural commons as well as the culture that requires dependence upon a money economy can only be done in face-to-face relationships between the student and teacher/professor. Learning about the differences between the two cultures, and developing the language necessary for naming and participating in the democratic process of determining what needs to be renewed or resisted require that the teacher/professor play the role of the mediator between what the students experience, their ways of thinking that often reproduce the misconceptions of the past, and what they take-for-granted. This role is entirely different from the role of the facilitator advocated by constructivist learning theorists who also view the computer as the technology that best enables students to construct their own knowledge—which is often based on abstract information they acquire from going online. The computer may be useful in learning about the past, but this should be secondary to the process of mediating between the students’ experiences in the two cultures they move between on a daily basis.

The last essay is about the misconceptions and assumptions that are encoded in how the political terms liberalism and conservatism are used today. In order to highlight the need to use these terms in a more historically accurate and currently accountable manner, the misconceptions reproduced in the formulaic use of these terms by political pundits, politicians, journalists, professors, and most citizens are discussed. The way in which these misconceptions, such as referring to corporations, and the other groups that support President George W. Bush’s foreign and domestic policies as conservatives, are sources of confusion of about what really needs to be conserved is given extended treatment. The essay makes a special plea for recognizing that the assumptions underlying both market and social justice liberalism are the same assumptions that gave conceptual direction and moral legitimacy to the industrial consumer-dependent culture that is a major contributor to global warming and to dumping billions of tons of carbon dioxide into the world’s oceans. This essay is likely to cause some readers who, in

thinking their liberalism is part of their genetic endowment, to be critical of my arguments for rectifying the use of our political vocabulary. For example, I argue that the loss of the civil liberties that have been part of the cultural commons since 1250, and the deepening ecological crises, means that we need to recover the political wisdom of such conservative thinkers as Edmund Burke, James Madison, Michael Oakeshott, Wendell Berry, Vandana Shiva, G. Bonfil Batalla, and the increasing number of people who are advocating support for local systems of production, mutual support, and democracy. These thinkers are urging us to conserve what remains of the cultural and environmental commons that contribute to morally coherent communities and to the systems of mutual support now under increasing threat from the market liberal's goal of creating total dependency upon what is industrially produced and sold.

The hope is that these essays will prompt further examination of other forms of enclosure by market forces and of the earlier misconceptions that still influence today's values and practices. There is also a need for others to take on the challenge of proposing how issues related to the inherent tensions between the commons, various forms of enclosure, and the deepening ecological crises can be incorporated into the curriculum of public schools and universities. Learning a new vocabulary for thinking about what has been marginalized and traditionally viewed as a source of backwardness will be difficult—especially for those who take pride in not knowing what they don't know. Learning to make radical changes in everyday habits that are made explicit in a commons-oriented educational process, when there are few models to follow, will be difficult. It needs to be kept in mind, however, that as global warming accelerates along with the disappearance of the sources of protein from the oceans, learning how to live less consumer-dependent lifestyles will be even more difficult—and will likely make Thomas Hobbes' prediction of a life that is “nasty, brutish, and short” a commonplace feature of everyday life. We have a choice, but only if we possess the background knowledge necessary for recognizing it.

Chapter 2 How the Linguistic Complicity of George Lakoff Supports the Market Liberal's Agenda of Enclosing What Remains of the Cultural and Environmental Commons

George Lakoff has made important contributions to our understanding of the nature of metaphorical thinking and its role in framing how we think and communicate. One of his important insights is that “words don’t have meaning in isolation. Words are defined relative to a conceptual system.” (2002, p. 29) Unfortunately, one of his shortcomings is that he failed to recognize that the origins of conceptual systems are culturally specific and that they have a history. These conceptual systems, which vary from culture to culture, reflect the power of root metaphors such as the Western root metaphors of patriarchy, progress, mechanism, and individualism. When it comes to his writings on the differences between how liberals and conservatives think Lakoff demonstrates yet another shortcoming that brings his whole project into question. That is, his effort to clarify the values and ideas that separate liberals and conservatives ignores the ecological crises, the enclosing of the world’s diverse cultural and environmental commons by the forces of economic globalization, and the undermining of our democratic institutions by the coalition of market liberal and Christian fundamentalists.

Thus, my advice is that if you are concerned about conserving species and habitats, conserving what remains of the non-monetized local cultural commons and the intergenerational knowledge it is based upon, and conserving such traditions as an independent judiciary, separation of church and state, and the separation of power between the three branches of government, it is important that you do not take George Lakoff as an authority on how to control the frame governing political debates. His two books that attempt to explain how conservatives and liberals think, Moral Politics: How Liberals and Conservatives Think (2002) and the more simplified treatment he gives to the same themes, Don’t Think of an Elephant: Know Your Values and Frame the Debate (2004), are outstanding examples of how authors often ignore the advice they want others to follow. Many of his insights about how right-wing extremists have succeeded in becoming the dominant force in American politics are essentially correct—including their

long-term approach to establishing the institutes that serve as the incubators for formulating market-liberal policies, and the strategies for achieving them.

However, he ignores his own advice on the more critical issue of using the word “progressive” as the primary metaphor for carrying the fight to the “conservatives”. That is, by ignoring that the right wing extremists are actually a coalition of market-liberal and Christian fundamentalists, he has accepted their take-over (framing) of the word conservative. At the same time, he ignores that a number of the cultural assumptions that underlie what he represents as a progressive, nurturing approach to politics are also the same assumptions that underlie the industrial, consumer-oriented culture that the market-liberals want to expand on a global basis. What is particularly surprising is that the examples of conservative beliefs and values that Lakoff cites turn out to be the core features of the free-market system. His lack of knowledge of the history of ideas is demonstrated when he cites Adam Smith’s principle of laissez-faire as one of the conceptual and moral foundations of the today’s conservatives. And his indifference to doing the necessary background research of current institutes that he labels as conservative can also be seen if one goes to the websites of the CATO and the American Enterprise Institutes. Both have posted statements on their websites that their political philosophy should not be identified as conservative as that “smacks of an unwillingness to change”--as it is noted on the CATO website. Both institutes also claim that they promote free markets and a diminished role for government. On an earlier CATO website posting titled “About Us” the point was made that only in America are people so uninformed that they identify the institute with a conservative agenda. And in labeling William F. Buckley Jr. as a leading conservative thinker, one wonders if Lakoff simply assumed that it was unnecessary to read how free markets were promoted in the National Review in order to assess the accuracy of Buckley’s claim to being a conservative. Perhaps evidence contrary to what fit neatly into his preconceived political categories was too risky for him to pursue.

If Lakoff possessed a more historical understanding of the layered nature of metaphorical thinking, he might have realized that the same root metaphors of individualism, anthropocentrism, and progress as an inherent characteristic of change (along with the hubris of an ethnocentric way of thinking) that support his use of

“progressive” as his legitimating metaphor are also taken-for-granted by the market-liberals. By directing his fire against what he thinks conservatism stands for, he forces the environmentalists and social justice advocates to identify themselves as progressive thinkers—even though there is nothing as progressive in terms of undermining important traditions (such as privacy, non-monetized relationships and activities) as the constant stream of technological innovations and the efforts to turn more of the cultural commons into the markets of an ever-expanding industrial/consumer-dependent culture.

Lakoff’s metaphor of the “strict father figure”, which he discusses at length in both books, cannot be traced back to the ideas of intergenerational responsibility that is at the center of Edmund Burke’s conservatism, now can it be found in the writings of such environmental conservatives as Wendell Berry and Vandana Shiva. If Lakoff had done his homework he would have found that the image of the “strict father figure”, as well as the idea that the rich should receive further rewards while the poor deserve to suffer further impoverishment, has its roots in the fundamentalist Christians’ understanding of a wrathful God. Deuteronomy 28 provides the analog for understanding the God/human as well as the rich/poor relationships that the fundamentalist Christians take-for-granted. The reductionist and dichotomous pattern of thinking that characterizes the fundamentalist Christians’ approach to such policy issues as gay marriage, reproductive rights of women, and the teaching of “intelligent design” can also be found in their claim to know the will of God—and to being God’s regents until the Second Coming.

If one follows current political events it should be abundantly clear that both market-liberal and Christian fundamentalists are working together to overturn the traditions of the separation of church and state, an independent judiciary, and the separation of powers between the three branches of government. They are making progress, to use Lakoff’s favorite metaphor, in undermining the gains made over the last decades in the areas of social justice and, more recently, in environmental protection. Returning the economy to a free-market system that is governed by the supposed natural law of supply and demand, and winning more converts that declare Jesus Christ as their personal savior, is the “progressive” agenda of these two groups. If Lakoff had given

attention to the actual political agenda of these two groups, it might have occurred to him to ask “What is it that the market-liberal and Christian fundamentalists want to conserve?”

Reactionary is not part of Lakoff’s political vocabulary. Instead of referring to market-liberals and fundamentalist Christians as conservatives --when, in fact, today’s market-liberals want to go back to the Truths held several hundred years ago, and today’s fundamentalist Christians want to go back to the Truths held several thousand years ago-- he should have used the more accurate labels of “reactionary” and “anti-democratic”. The fundamental difference between a mindful conservative and a reactionary thinker is highlighted in the speech that Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia gave at the University of Chicago in 2002. In a speech titled “God’s Justice and Ours,” he acknowledged that he did not subscribe to “the conventional fallacy that the Constitution is a ‘living document’ —that is, a text that means from age to age whatever society (or perhaps the Courts) think it ought to mean.” In effect, Scalia is claiming that the political consensus reached over the last two hundred or so years on social justice issues should not be conserved. Rather, the achievements of the democratic process must be rejected in favor of using the “original intent” of the men who wrote the Constitution as the guide for judging which laws are appropriate for the country to live by. The analog for understanding what reactionary means is the person such as Scalia that wants to go back to the”Truths” of an earlier time and thus claim that the achievements in recent years have no significance.

A conservative in the Burkean tradition would want to conserve the political achievements of the recent past—including, within our historical context, the democratic process itself. Journalists and media pundits commit the same error that underlies Lakoff’s context-free use of the conservative metaphor by referring to Scalia as a conservative when it would be more accurate, in light of his ideas, to refer to him as a “reactionary extremist.” That is, he wants to force the nation to go back to an earlier way of thinking—one that could not anticipate the issues we now face. Lakoff’s use of conservative is context-free as he does not ask what the people he labels as conservative want to conserve. If he had the insight to explore further the deeper and largely unrecognized implications of Scalia’s doctrine of “original intent” he would have found that it is really a subterfuge for declaring the federal laws that regulate corporate abuses

and that provide a safety net for the nation's poor and marginalized to be unconstitutional.

There are a number of possible reasons that Lakoff reproduces the formulaic thinking that reduces our political categories to that of conservative and liberal. One plausible explanation is that he wants to ground the theory of metaphor as a branch of cognitive science, which leads him to argue that repetition in the use of preferred metaphors alters the synapses in the brain. As all languages illuminate and hide, which is an aspect of the process of framing which interpretative system is to be used, Lakoff's scientific orientation marginalizes the importance of understanding the historical nature of how root metaphors (the meta-cognitive schemata) frame the process of thinking over hundreds, even thousands of years—and over a wide range of cultural practices. Examples of root metaphors in the West include mechanism, individualism, patriarchy, progress, anthropocentrism, and, now, evolution. The root metaphors of patriarchy and anthropocentrism (both still held by the market-liberal, fundamentalist Christian coalition) are being challenged by social justice advocates, while “ecology” is beginning to be used as a root metaphor by people concerned with conserving the environmental and the cultural commons.

If Lakoff had adopted an historical perspective on how metaphors carry forward over many generations the analogs that made sense before there was an awareness of environmental limits, and before the various forms of social inequalities were challenged, he might have avoided creating the linguistic double bind that he now wants to saddle social justice and environmental advocates with. That is, his use of “progressive” as the label for many groups, such as environmentalists and civil libertarians, precludes using the vocabulary that foregrounds the real political issues that are on the verge of being decided by the market-liberal and Christian fundamentalists' understanding of what constitutes progress. Referring to civil libertarians as “progressives” suggests that they are oriented toward change. This frame hides what they are really about, which is conserving the liberties and protections that the Constitution guarantees. Instead of using “progress” as a context-free metaphor (that is, as metaphor that has no historically-grounded analogs) that market-liberals have a history of identifying with, Lakoff should have used social and eco-justice as his umbrella (root) metaphors. Civil libertarians are

concerned with using the law to achieve social justice; while environmentalists are concerned with eco-justice (that is, conserving the cultural and environmental commons for future generations of humans and natural systems). Tagging environmentalists with the same context-free metaphor that the timber industry uses to justify cutting what remains of the old growth forests, and that corporations use to describe their special relationship with the Bush administration that allows them to help roll back environmental legislation, is equally problematic.

Lakoff's insights about how words, and the conceptual systems that people associate with them, frame what will be the focus of political discourse as well as what will be ignored is essentially correct. His mistake, which he shares with most journalists, media pundits, along with other university graduates that should know better, is in not recognizing the many ways the different expressions of conservatism are an inescapable aspect of everyday life. These include temperamental conservatism which we all share in various ways: the food, conversations, friends, place-based experiences, degree of privacy, and so on, that we are comfortable with. This form of conservatism has no specific ideological orientation—but it is a form of conservatism shared even by ideologues who ignore their own experiences in rejecting all forms of conservatism. In speaking and thinking within the language of our cultural group, we carry forward (conserve) the taken-for-granted patterns of the culture's multiple forms of communication. Depending upon the culture, these taken-for-granted patterns may be given individualized expression, with some of the patterns being made explicit in ways that lead to reform or to conscious efforts at conserving them. There is also the misnamed "conservatism" that is based on the free-market, progress-oriented ideology promoted by the CATO and American Enterprise Institutes that emphasize the autonomous individual as the basic unit of rational decision-making and social change. And there is a long-standing tradition of philosophic conservatism that began with Burke, and has included critics of de-humanizing technologies such as William Morris and Michael Oakeshott. In America, philosophic conservatives presented the cautionary warnings that led to a system of indirect democracy, checks and balances, separation of church and state. As environmental conservatives such as Wendell Berry and Aldo Leopold have appeared on the scene more recently, their writings can also be legitimately

included in the category of philosophical conservatism. The recent efforts of a small group of scientists to get their colleagues to take seriously what they call the “precautionary principle” before introducing new technologies into the environment is yet another expression of conservative thinking. However, the oldest form of conservatism that needs to be revitalized is the conserving of the non-monetized intergenerational knowledge, skills, and activities that enabled people to live more mutually supportive and less money dependent lives. It is this form of conservatism that is now being undermined by market liberals who equate progress with turning what remains of the cultural commons into new markets, and the forms of dependency that come with them. What Lakoff does not recognize is that our traditions of civil liberties are also part of our cultural commons, and that they should not be entrusted to the market liberal and Christian fundamentalists who are now taking the country down the politically slippery slope toward an authoritarian future that they equate with progress.

Lakoff’s limited political vocabulary not only misrepresents who his label of conservative is supposed to fit, but it also leads to a continuation of the intellectual poverty that now characterizes today’s political discourse. Most university professors share Lakoff’s formulaic misuse of the term conservative, which they use as the label for President George W. Bush’s domestic and foreign policies, fundamentalist Christians, Supreme Court justices such as Scalia and Thomas, and the efforts of most corporations to promote the globalization of the West’s industrial, consumer-dependent culture. A consequence of this formulaic thinking is that few university professors take seriously the need for university graduates to have a knowledge of the history of political thought in the West.

The cultural root metaphors of mechanism, individualism, progress, anthropocentrism, as well as the ethnocentrism that frames so much of the content of university courses, contributes to why so many graduates make what appears as the seamless transition from the classroom to working for the market-liberal goals of the Bush administration. Without this historical knowledge of what separates the tradition of philosophic conservatism from the thinking of classical liberalism, many self-labeled “conservative” students on university campuses are unaware that their ideas are derived from the classical liberal thinkers, plus more contemporary libertarian theorists. And

many of the professors that continue to misrepresent what today's faux conservatives stand for fail to recognize that their liberalism shares many of the assumptions that underlie the industrial culture they criticize for the social and environmental injustices they perpetuate.

In light of the scale of environmental changes that are now impacting people's lives, what universities should be helping students to understand is the nature and importance of revitalizing what remains of the cultural and environmental commons—for reasons that have to do with learning how to live more community-centered and less money dependent lives, with reducing our ecological foot-print by becoming less dependent upon industrial foods, health care, leisure activities, and so on, and with ensuring that the diversity of the world's cultural commons (including the diversity of cultural languages) are not further diminished. The potential of the world's diverse cultural commons to become sites of resistance to the further expansion of economic globalization is not learned in most universities. The importance of the cultural commons as alternatives to the very real possibility of ecological collapse that Jared Diamond writes about will continue to be marginalized by the way Lakoff reinforces the formulaic thinking of most university professors. The irony is that both the mislabeled conservatives and the self-identified liberals (again a form of mislabeling) possess the liberal vocabulary that came into existence before there was an awareness of environmental limits, and that there are different cultural ways of knowing. A further irony is that their shared liberal vocabulary, where the emphasis is placed either on the metaphors that justify expanding markets and profits or on addressing unresolved social justice issues that prevent people from participating more fully in a market economy, has been used in the past to further undermine the cultural commons by promoting a consumer-dependent existence.

Chapter 3 Why the Ideas of Dewey and Freire Cannot Contribute to Revitalizing the Cultural and Environmental Commons

(This essay originally appeared in Capitalism Nature Socialism, Vol. 17 No. 3 2006)

The growing awareness that the rate and nature of change in the world's cultures is not sustainable by the Earth's ecosystems now makes it possible to ask questions about the problematic nature of the ideas of John Dewey and Paulo Freire that were overlooked by earlier followers and critics. Indeed, the case can be made that the recent revival of interest in Dewey's ideas is partly due to the assumption that he has been overlooked as an early environmental thinker.¹ Just as this effort is characterized by theoretical arguments that do not take account of the knowledge systems of different cultures, the recent attempt by Moacir Gadotti, the Director of the Instituto Paulo Freire in Brazil, is making a similar attempt to represent Freire as a leading environmental educator.² Gadotti also commits the same error of ignoring the differences in cultural knowledge systems by trying to explain that education can create a planetary consciousness only by not degenerating into a process of cultural transmission—which was a hallmark of Freire's arguments for an emancipatory pedagogy.

These efforts raise the basic question of whether the cultural assumptions that both Dewey and Freire took-for-granted doom these efforts to failure. Before making the argument that in spite of their respective concern with rectifying the unresolved social justice issues they both shared a number of assumptions with today's proponents of globalizing the industrial/consumer based culture that is increasing the rate of environmental degradation I need to summarize four major trends that are putting our collective future at risk. This summary is intended to serve as a reference point for assessing whether the pro-environmental interpretations of the core ideas of Dewey and Dewey can turn them into sources of resistance to these destructive trends.

1 Andrew Light and Eric Katz (editors). Environmental Pragmatism. (New York: Routledge, 1996).

2. Moacir Gadotti. "Pedagogy of the Earth and Culture of Sustainability." (Instituto Paulo Freire. Sao Paulo, Brazil. 2002). Pp. 1-11.

The Ecological Crisis. The ecological crisis has many elements: the depletion of fisheries beyond their capacity to renew themselves; the increasing shortage of potable water; global warming that is changing habits and threatening species; loss of topsoil now estimated at thirty-three percent on a world-wide basis; the increasing amount of toxins in the environment—including in the oceans. In short, the ability of the environment to sustain the life of humans and other species is being rapidly diminished.

Globalization of the West's Technological, Consumer Dependent Culture. The continued expansion of the world's population is being accompanied by the globalization of the West's approach to a money-based economy, greater dependence upon consumerism and the adoption of new technologies—including technologies that contribute to outsourcing to regions where workers can be more easily exploited. These trends are undermining what remains of the intergenerational knowledge, both here and in other cultures that represent alternatives to a consumer dependent lifestyle. These trends are enforced by international institutions such as the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and the World Trade Organization—all of which are based on neo-liberal ideas and values that represent all aspects of human activity as well as the natural environment, as exploitable markets.

Loss of Cultural/Linguistic Diversity. The forces that promote a Western form of consciousness and consumer expectations—the media, computers, corporate advertising, Western universities, etc.—are contributing to the loss of linguistic diversity. Of the approximately 6000 languages still spoken today (some by only a few members of the culture), it is estimated that a large number will disappear in the next few decades. The loss of these languages will contribute to the further loss of species, as it is now understood by some linguists that these languages encode the knowledge of the renewing cycle of plants and animals within the bioregion.³ Within many of these cultures, language carries forward the

3. Daniel Nettle and Suzanne Romaine. Vanishing Voices: The Extinction of the World's Languages. (New York: Oxford University Press. 2000). Pp. 60-68. Peter Muhlhäusler. Linguistic Ecology: Language Change and Linguistic Imperialism in the Pacific Region. (London: Routledge. 1996).

intergenerational knowledge of how to meet daily needs without degrading the ecosystems they depended upon, and thus is inextricably related to how the culture impacts the local environment. However, other languages, such as those based on Western assumptions, represent the rational process as being able to overcome the adverse impact of humans on the environment, and thus distort how to understand a sustainable relationship between cultural practices and the sustaining capacity of the environment.

Revitalization of the Cultural and Environmental Commons Represents Sites of Resistance to the Forces of Globalization. While the enclosure of the environmental commons began well before the Industrial Revolution, both the cultural and environmental commons are now being monetized and integrated into industrial/consumer-oriented culture on a global scale. Every aspect of the cultural and environmental commons is now subject to being appropriated as private or corporation property, from the intergenerational knowledge and skills that enabled people to live less consumer dependent lives to the gene lines of humans, plants, and animals. Even the airwaves and the new commons of cyberspace are being monetized. Resistance to the further enclosure of the commons can be found in many Third World cultures, including cultures in Mexico, Peru, Bolivia, and India. There are individuals, groups, and institutions in so-called developed countries that are resisting the further enclosure of what were previously public lands. Resistance in these countries is also taking the form of living lives of voluntary simplicity, recovering the tradition of slow food, and renewing networks of mutual support. These groups are attempting to conserve traditions that enable people to live less monetary dependent and environmentally destructive lives, and their mindful conservatism stands in sharp contrast to what Jorge Ishizawa refers to as the “colonizing gaze” of the neo-liberals that equate progress with the economic exploitation of the commons.

While the above summary of changes in cultures and natural systems does not adequately identify the unaddressed social justice issues in some of the world’s commons, it nevertheless foregrounds the key ideas and issues that will be used here to assess whether the ideas of John Dewey and Paulo Freire are complicit in promoting the global culture that can expand only as it further encloses the world’s cultural and environmental commons. The task here is to assess where these two theorists stand on the key issues summarized above: viewing change as linear and progressive in nature; promoting the assumptions and ways of thinking that gave conceptual direction and moral legitimacy to the development of the Industrial

Revolution that is now in its digital phase of development—while reproducing the silences that characterized the thinking of classical liberal social theorists; failing to recognize that cultural/linguistic diversity contributes to conserving species diversity and sustainable habitats; and failing to recognize the nature and importance of the cultural commons as alternatives to the money-dependent lives required by the industrial culture. A fifth issue that needs to be part of the discussion of the relevance of the ideas of Dewey and Freire is their failure to recognize that critical inquiry is as important to determining what needs to be conserved as it is to determining what needs to be changed. As fundamentalist Christians and market liberals in the White House and Congress are working to undermine the separation of church and state, an independent judiciary, and the gains in the labor movement and civil rights, conserving what remains of our degraded democratic system become even more urgent.

Silence of Dewey and Freire About the Nature of the Ecological Crisis. At first glance it may appear as unfair to criticize Dewey for ignoring the ecological crisis since it was well after his death that scientists and elements of the public recognized the sustaining capacity of natural systems were being undermined. Yet the fact remains that the ecological crisis as we now understand it was well underway during Dewey's most formative years. The method of intelligence, he tells us over and over again, is initiated by problematic situations—that is, when there is doubt about how to proceed. The clear cutting of the forests across the United States was in full swing during his years in Chicago and New York. The killing off of millions of bison, which was given wide press coverage, also escaped his attention as a problematic situation. The writings of Henry David Thoreau and John Muir also appear to have escaped his attention, as well as conservation arguments of Theodore Roosevelt and Gifford Pinchot.

It should also be pointed out that Dewey, the apostle of democratic decision making, also ignored the killing off of the indigenous people in order to appropriate their land—and the efforts to culturally subjugate those who survived what some have called genocide. Given that Dewey was born in 1859, it was in his twenties and thirties when America turned its attention from the Civil War to carrying out a number of military campaigns in the West. The campaign against the Sioux lasted from 1854 to 1890, against the Southern Plain indigenous cultures from 1860 to 1879, against the Nez Perce in 1877, and against the Apache from 1861 to 1900. The best explanation for Dewey's silence about these morally “problematic” situations is that

he shared the racist attitudes of his era—which were reflected in his references to how the lives of “savages” (his word) were governed by habits rather than the use of intelligence.

As many of his current followers are likely to react negatively to the criticism that Dewey shared the racist attitudes of his times, I shall provide a quotation from Democracy and Education—which is a surprising book for the expression of such ignorance and prejudice by one of the country’s leading philosophers. The following represents his explanation of the “savage’s” lack of intelligence.

Savages react to a flaming comet as they are accustomed to react to other events that threaten the security of their life. Since they try to frighten wild animals or their enemies by shrieks, beating of gongs, brandishing weapons, etc., they use the same methods to scare away the comet. To us, the use of the method is plainly absurd—so absurd that we fail to note that savages are simply falling back upon habit in a way which exhibits its limitations. 4

Dewey’s way of representing habits, or what in a cultural context can be understood as traditions, as the opposite of the exercise of what he calls the method of intelligence represents another basic misconceptions that has broader implications that will be examined later.

Paulo Freire, the contemporary theorist who has followers around the world, also ignored the ecological crisis. His most influential book, Pedagogy of the Oppressed (English translation published in 1969) as well as his other books published in the nineteen seventies and eighties, are totally silent on the implications of the ecological crisis for educational reform. The closest he comes to acknowledging the crisis is his generalized reference to “environmental problems”. But this was not followed by any rethinking of his main concern—which was to explain how the practice of “conscientizacao” (awaking of critical awareness) enables people to realize their fullest potential as human beings. Moacir Gadotti, as mentioned earlier, claims that just before his death, Freire began to write on the need for an “ecopedagogy.” At an international conference held in Toronto in 2003, Gadotti predicted that when Freire’s initial thoughts on the nature of an ecopedagogy were published he would be recognized as a leading environmental thinker. In the meantime, Gadotti writings were to be understood as an elaboration on Freire’s unpublished insights.

4. John Dewey, Democracy and Education. New York: Macmillan, 1916). P. 396

While we only have access to Gadotti's elaborations on Freire's last thoughts on the educational reform implications of the ecological crisis, it is important to recognize that Gadotti's proposals are consistent with Freire's two main ideas: that there is only one legitimate approach to knowledge (critical reflection). The opposite approach to knowledge was labeled by Freire as the banking approach to learning. The development of a planetary consciousness, according to Gadotti, requires that knowledge not be passed on from one generation to the next. To quote him directly, "Education then, would not be as Emile Durkheim explained as the transmission of culture 'from one generation to the next,' but the grand journey of each individual in his interior universe and the universe that surrounds him." 5 Gadotti's recommendation that a planetary consciousness should replace the current diversity of the world's cultures is consistent with Freire's idea that there is only one approach to knowledge. This profoundly questionable recommendation is justified on the following grounds: "Globalization in itself does not pose a problem, since it constitutes an unprecedented process of advancement in the history of humankind." 6

Equally questionable is Gadotti's sweeping generalization that knowledge should not be passed from one generation to the next. Given that being born into a culture and learning its languaging patterns is an inescapable aspect of human existence as well as cultural transmission, Gadotti's recommendation seems extremely naïve as well as problematic. Yet, this is where Gadotti is accurately representing Freire's hard-and-fast distinction between what he identifies as the de-humanizing banking approach to learning and the humanizing nature of critical reflection. As Freire put it:

Human existence cannot be silent, nor can it be nourished by false words, but only by true words, with which men transform the world. To exist humanly, is to *name* the

5. Moacir Gadotti. "Pedagogy of the Earth and Culture of Sustainability." Instituto Paulo Freire, Sao Paulo, Brazil, 2002), p. 8.

6. Loc cit.

world, to change it. Once named, the world in its turn reappears to the namers as a problem and requires of them a new *naming*. Men are not built in silence, but in word, in work, in action-reflection. But while to say the true word—which is work, which is praxis—is to transform the world, saying that word is not the privilege of some few men, but the right of every man. Consequently, no one can say a true word alone—nor can he say it *for* another, in a prescriptive act which robs others of their words.⁷

Freire goes on to discuss the importance of dialogue as a way of avoiding any form of domination, but he ignores the problem of whether it is totally possible to avoid what he refers to as “dehumanizing aggression.” The opposite of dehumanizing aggression is when each individual and, by extension, each generation, is expected to arrive at her/his own understanding—including what changes are occurring in the environment and what the implications are for “transforming the world.” Even if individuals were to arrive at an understanding of the extent of the ecological crisis, this knowledge could not be passed on to the next generation without it becoming an example of dehumanizing aggression—to recall Freire’s words.

The Problem of Reconciling the Respective One-True-Approach to Knowledge of Dewey and Freire With the Need to Conserve the World’s Cultural/Linguistic Diversity. What is surprising is that the ethnocentrism that characterizes the thinking of both Dewey and Freire has gone unnoticed by their followers. Perhaps this is because they are also rooted in the same ethnocentrism that would make it difficult to recognize. The other source of amazement is that both Dewey and Freire have been acclaimed as promoters of democracy as well as emancipators from past sources of injustice. What has been overlooked is Dewey’s argument, which he repeats over and over, that what he calls the method of intelligence (experimental inquiry) is the only valid approach to knowledge—knowledge which is always to be held provisionally. Dewey’s ethnocentrism can be seen in the book, Reconstruction in Philosophy which was based on the lectures he presented in 1919 at the Imperial University in Japan. Although he must have been aware that his hosts and the audience attending his lectures lived in accordance with profoundly different traditions and had a very high level of cultural

Ibid., p. 77.

achievement, the only aspect of their culture that he mentions in the Prefatory Note to Reconstruction in Philosophy is their extreme courtesy.⁸ The main messages he presented to his Japanese audience is that change is the dominant reality, that the use of the experimental method of inquiry is the only way to control the direction of change and thus to experience progress, and that cultures that do not adopt this new scientifically based way of thinking would remain locked in a spectator approach to knowledge. He further warned that without the method of experimental inquiry for reconstructing experience there would be no chance of achieving a democratic society, nor of realizing the “industrialization (that) is the direct fruit of the growth of the experimental method of knowing.”⁹

The issue here is that Dewey’s argument that there is only one approach to knowledge, which he gives ontological status rather than recognizing that it was the privileged way of thinking of the elites that were then building an industrial-based culture in the West, is basically undemocratic. The contradiction inherent in associating the world-wide promotion of Dewey’s experimental approach to knowledge and values with the spreading of democracy, when in reality it would undermine the diversity of the world’s cultures, has also gone unnoticed by his followers. The universalizing of Dewey’s ideas would represent both a form of cultural colonization, and would undermine what many cultures have accumulated as a fund of intergenerational knowledge of how to live within the limits of the local ecosystems. As some readers are still likely to hold to the uninformed idea that all indigenous cultures destroyed their environment, I suggest that they read G. Bonfil Batalla’s Mexico Profundo: Reclaiming a Civilization (1996), Keith Basso’s Wisdom Sits in Places: Landscape and Language Among the Western Apache (1996), Frederique Apffel-Marglin’s (editor with PRATEC) The Spirit of Regeneration: ndean Culture Confronting Western Notions of Development (19098). Both Batalla and Apffel-Marglin (anthropologists with a social justice orientation) document how indigenous cultures in Mesoamerica and the Peruvian Andes are struggling to maintain their

8. John Dewey, Reconstruction in Philosophy. (Boston: Beacon Press, 1948 edition) p. xlii.

9. John Dewey, The Quest for Certainty. (New York: G.P. Putnman’s Sons. 1960 edition). P.79

traditional systems of agriculture in the face of government and corporate pressures to adopt the Western system of schools and the new technologies that will make them dependent upon a money economy. These are only a few of the books that document the ecological wisdom of cultures that have combined careful observation of changes occurring within their environment, intergenerational knowledge of how to live in mutually supportive ways, and a sense of responsibility to the well-being of future generations. Their diverse approaches to renewing cultural practices that are ecologically sustainable require multiple forms of learning and renewal that do not fit Dewey's narrow scientifically based prescriptions. Jared Diamond's Collapse: How Societies Choose to Fail or Succeed (2005) is important because it documents how the cultural knowledge systems that did not take account of how to live within the limits and possibilities of the bioregion collapsed and disappeared.

Freire's rejection of all the forms of cultural transmission that occur in the world's diverse cultures as impeding the right of each individual to rename the world of the previous generation has also become the basis for justifying, in the name of emancipation and freedom, the colonization of these less evolved cultures. Today, Freire's idea that each individual is to name the world is the basis, along with the ideas of Dewey and Piaget, of what is now referred to as a constructivist approach to learning. The idea that each student is to construct her/his own knowledge is now an orthodoxy in many colleges of education in English speaking countries, and it has been adopted as the basis of educational reform in 29 other countries—such as Japan, Taiwan, Mexico, Peru, Bolivia, and Brazil. In effect, Freire's culturally uninformed argument that the individual's construction of knowledge through critical reflection leads to emancipation and progress is the source of the double bind where emancipation requires colonization to the Western Enlightenment ideal that was itself never informed about the differences in cultural knowledge systems—and the impact of these knowledge systems on the environment.

Freire also shared with Dewey the Social Darwinian thinking that has partly replaced the earlier Western tradition of dismissing non-Western cultures as pagan and primitive. Freire does not use Dewey's metaphor of "savage," but he clearly states that humans evolve through three stages of development. In Education for Critical Consciousness (1973), he explains the three stages in human evolution as "semi-intransitivity of consciousness," "transitivity of consciousness," and "critical transitivity of consciousness." The groups living in the interior of

Brazil, according to Freire, exist at the level of semi-intransitive consciousness, and thus “cannot apprehend problems situated outside their sphere of biological necessity.” In this animal stage of existence, “their interests center almost totally around survival, and they lack a sense of life on a more historical plane.”¹⁰ The second stage of human evolution that he calls “transitivity of consciousness” initially begins with a naïve phase where there is an oversimplification of problems, a nostalgia for the past, and a tendency to underestimate the potential of the common man. But as humans evolve further, and reach the stage of critically transitive consciousness, they are capable of engaging in critical reflection, dialogue, and participating in democratic regimes.¹¹ Freire identifies himself, as well as his followers, with the most evolved state of human development. Recently, a group of Third World activists reflected upon their experience of attempting to use Freire’s approach to teaching literacy in cultures where they spoke the local languages—in India, Central Mexico, Peru, and Bolivia. They found that his pedagogy represented a Western way of thinking, and that the indigenous cultures that Freire identified as living at an animal stage of existence possessed a complex understanding of the local ecosystems that had enabled them to survive over thousands of years in the same bioregion.¹² In the case of the Quechua of the Peruvian Andes they developed what is now recognized as one of the world’s greatest diversity of edible plants.

Given the view of the non-Western cultures held by both Dewey and Freire, it is not surprising that they failed to recognize that different cultures develop, in part, in response to the differences in the bioregions they inhabit. Their followers have also ignored the fundamental question of our era, which is the focus of Jared Diamond’s book, Collapse: How Societies Choose to Fail or Succeed (2005). Ironically, many of the cultures that Freire categorized as existing at an animal level of existence have not collapsed. Instead, as the Third World activists initially attempted to introduce critical thinking as part of the literacy program, they discovered that Freire’s emphasis on emancipation from the knowledge of previous generations would undermine the complex knowledge of the sustaining characteristics of the local ecosystems—and would thus lead to the culture’s collapse.

10. Paulo Freire. Education for Critical Consciousness. (New York: Seabury Press. 1973). Pp. 17-18

11. loc cite.

12. C. A. Bowers and Frederique Apffel-Marglin (editors) Rethinking Freire: Globalization and the Environmental Crisis. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum. 2005).

As Diamond's exhaustive documentation demonstrates, it was the lack of knowledge of the self-renewing characteristics of the local ecosystems that led cultures to end in starvation.

The Cultural Assumptions that Dewey and Freire Share with the Industrial Culture that is Now Being Globalized. The earlier discussion has already identified a number of cultural assumptions that were the basis of the early and, now, current phase of the industrial culture that is undermining the local commons. While Dewey and Freire were critical of the undemocratic and exploitive nature of the West's industrial culture, they took-for-granted the need for continual experimentation without regard for the importance of the traditions that might be undermined. They also took-for-granted the assumption that change is linear and progressive when guided by critical reflection, and an anthropocentric way of understanding human/Nature relationships. In addition, it should not be overlooked that they shared with the promoters of the industrial culture a way of thinking of non-Western cultures as backward and thus in need of being rescued. They also identified themselves with liberalism without recognizing that a key component of liberal thinking is to view the expansion of free markets as the basis of social progress.

Readers may flinch at this criticism of Dewey and Freire. But they need to recognize that the experimental approach to knowledge advocated by Dewey is essential to the development of new technologies and to creating the infrastructure necessary for exploiting new markets. As Dewey put it, "the modern mine, factory, railway, steamship, telegraph, all the appliances and equipment of production, and transportation express scientific knowledge." 13 The task facing philosophers, as Dewey understood it, was to establish a new basis for determining the moral values that would make the benefits of the industrial culture available on a more equitable basis. This is a very different task than resisting the development of a global monoculture where, ironically, Dewey's method of scientific inquiry has been co-opted by technologists and business elites that have achieved greater efficiency in continually reconstructing daily experience through the introduction of new technologies and consumer goods. It also needs to be emphasized that Freire's assumption that critical inquiry would always be used in the service of emancipation and in helping people achieve their highest potential as humans was equally naïve. That is, critical reflection is not always

13. John Dewey. Reconstruction in Philosophy, pp. 43-44.

guided by social justice concerns. Today, critical reflection is also being used by scientists, technologists, and capitalists to develop new technologies, to plan wars of aggression, and to manipulate elections. And like Dewey's experimental inquiry, critical reflection has no built-in safeguards against ethnocentric thinking. Indeed, when critical reflection is used by non-ethnocentric thinkers, it is more likely to take account of local cultural contexts and thus not lead to the universal prescriptions that were the hallmark of the thinking of Dewey and Freire.

Why Dewey, Freire, and Their Followers Continue to Ignore the Cultural and Environmental Commons as Sites of Resistance to Economic Globalization and Environmental Destruction.

The emphasis of Dewey and Freire on achieving progress through the continual reconstruction and renaming of experience (i.e. the cultural patterns that are intergenerationally handed down) involves a double bind that they did not recognize—and that may account for their follower's criticism of what turns out to be the dominant characteristic of how the cultural and environmental commons are renewed: namely, the intergenerational knowledge of how to live less consumer-dependent and environmentally destructive lives. The intergenerational knowledge of the world's diverse cultural and environmental commons—narratives that in many instances encode the moral norms governing human/Nature relationships, technologies adapted to the local environment, patterns of mutual support, mentoring in crafts and healing practices, and so forth—are also known as traditions. As explained earlier, both Dewey and Freire were against traditions, even as they re-enacted many of the traditions of their respective cultures in the act of speaking, writing, preparing a meal, overcoming illnesses, using money, and so forth.

The rejection of the “banking” approach to learning and the equally formulaic prescription that “speaking a true word changes the world” was Freire's way of dismissing *all* traditions as sources of oppression. Kirkpatrick Sale makes an observation in Rebels Against the Future (1995) that has particular relevance for understanding the implications of Freire's simplistic understanding of the nature of tradition—which is also reproduced in the writings of his many followers. In writing about the difference between the Luddite's understanding of the relationship between the community and technology, and the impact of the capitalist approach to production on community, he notes that

All that ‘community’ implies—self-sufficiency, mutual aid, morality in the market place, stubborn tradition, regulation by custom, organic knowledge instead of mechanistic science—had to be steadily and systematically disrupted and displaced. All the practices that kept the individual from being a consumer had to be done away with so that the cogs and wheels of an unfettered machine called the ‘economy’ could operate without interference, influenced merely by invisible hands and inevitable balances and all the rest of the benevolent free-market system.¹⁴

Sale’s observation about the form of individualism needed by the capitalist system of production—that is, the individual who has been liberated from the community’s knowledge and patterns of moral reciprocity that contributed to living more self-sufficient and less consumer dependent lives—corresponds with Freire’s ideal of the fully humanized individual who relies upon critical reflection to continually rename the world. Learning the skills suited to maintaining the built culture that fit the local environmental conditions, the patterns of mutual aid within the community, the arts and narratives that help to renew the culture’s values and sense of identity, and the knowledge of acquiring the fiber and protein necessary to sustain life without degrading the environment, are all acquired through mentoring relationships, direct observation, and embodied learning. Freire’s critical reflection and Dewey’s experimental inquiry are also part of this mix of knowing which traditions need to be carried forward (conserved), modified, or rejected entirely.

In his last book, Mentoring the Mentor (1997), Freire urges his followers to respect the cultural identity of the students, and warns against the dangers of developing a paternalistic relationship with them. What appears as an awakening on Freire’s part to the importance of maintaining the diversity of the world’s cultures (which would be a potential first step to recognizing the connections between cultural and biodiversity) turns out to be a ritualistic gesture dictated by the current stage of politically-correct thinking. Later in the book, Freire demonstrates that he still did not understand that other cultures, such as the Quechua of the Peruvian Andes, the Inuit of the sub-arctic North, and the cultures based on Buddhist

14. Kirkpatrick Sale, Rebels Against the Future: The Luddites and Their War on the Industrial Revolution. (Reading MA.: Addison-Wesley. 1995). P. 38.

Confucian, and Hindu cosmologies—to cite just a few, do not interpret freedom and development as leading to the total autonomy of the individual. It is also important to understand that Freire’s idea of mentoring was limited to emancipating students from the knowledge systems of their communities. He did not understand, for example, that mentors play an important role in passing on the knowledge, skill, and moral norms governing healing practices, artistic performances, human/Nature relationships, agricultural practices, preparation of food and the social setting in which it is shared, and so forth. Rather, Freire addressed the potential pitfall in the teacher/student relationship, and then ignored his own warning by proclaiming that the god-words of the West must be given primacy over all other cultural traditions. As he put it,

The fundamental task of the teacher is a liberatory task. It is not to encourage the mentor’s goal and aspirations and dreams to be reproduced in the mentees, the students, but to give rise to the possibility that the students become owners of their own history. This is how I understand the need that teachers have to transcend their merely instructive task and assume the ethical posture of a mentor who truly believes in the *total autonomy*, *freedom*, and *development* of those he or she mentors. (italics added) 15

Again, it needs to be emphasized that if the person reading this statement is unaware of the profound differences in other cultural ways of knowing, and is equally uninformed that capitalism relies upon many of the same cultural assumptions that both Dewey and Freire took-for-granted, they are likely to consider Freire’s statement as representing the highest ideals that all progressive reformers should strive to achieve. To reiterate what is often overlooked, the assumptions that capitalism shares with the thinking of Dewey and Freire include equating change with progress, an anthropocentric understanding of human/nature relationships, and a deeply held combination of ethnocentrism and hubris that leads to universalizing a vision of progress.

How the Ideas of Dewey and Freire Contribute to Undermining what Remains of the World’s Diverse Commons. Part of the explanation of how Dewey, Freire, and their contemporary

15. Paul Freire (Editor) Mentoring the Mentor: A Critical Dialogue with Paulo Freire. (New York: Peter Lang. 1997). P. 324.

followers contribute to the further enclosure of the commons by the capitalist culture has already been touched upon. A summary includes their long silence on the worsening state of natural systems, their emphasis on approaches to knowledge that are also the basis of technological innovation and of bringing more aspects of the cultural and environmental commons under the control of market forces, and their Social Darwinian thinking that justified the imposition of the high-status approaches to knowledge on other culture—all in the name of democracy and freedom.

Even though Dewey argued that experimental inquiry would free humankind from the constraints of the spectator approach to knowledge as well as superstitions, he could not escape from taking-for-granted the cultural practices and ways of thinking of his era. Indeed, he is not alone in overestimating the liberating power of different forms of critical rationality. What is important to note, however, is that his argument for the use of the method of intelligence was based on a false dichotomy that prevented him from examining the taken-for-granted cultural patterns, assumptions, and silences that are not experienced as part of problematic situations—which, according to Dewey, sparks the process of experimental inquiry. But before examining more closely why his approach to knowledge could not take account of one of the more distinctive characteristics of the commons, it is necessary to identify an aspect of his thinking that, if separated out from the rest of this theory of knowledge, is essential to the renewal of the cultural commons—and by extension would help to reduce the adverse impact of the cultural practices on the environmental commons.

In identifying the chief characteristics of the cultural and environmental commons we find that one of them is that access and use are not restricted by private or corporate ownership (though it may be restricted by the status system and other cultural norms). In today's world, and in our culture, access to water in urban and most rural towns is provided by municipal water systems. This as well as access to water from a nearby stream or even from a private well is still, in most places, under the local control of democratic decision making. Again, democratic decision making is part of the process of deciding what is to remain part of the commons, and what is to be governed by the laws and greed of the market place. A case can be made that even though the monetizing of the cultural commons has been carried to an extreme, such as in the United States and other Western countries, there are still aspects of the cultural commons that are governed by local decision making. While Dewey emphasized that the

experimental method of inquiry was best suited to reconstructing problematic situations, he also emphasized that the widest possible communication between members of the community would ensure the fullest understanding of the problematic situation—and thus would lead to solutions that best fit the community’s expectations. In effect, his emphasis on participatory decision making (as long as all the participants did not fall back on other sources of moral authority and approaches to knowledge) is in line with how many cultures have protected the commons over the past centuries. While this aspect of Dewey’s thinking supports a core feature that is essential but not always successful in sustaining the commons, his reductionist way of understanding the nature of traditions, which is another core feature of the cultural commons, is the source of a double bind in his thinking. Unfortunately, environmentalists who are beginning to look to Dewey’s ideas as the bases for addressing environmental issues fail to recognize how other aspects of his thinking support the Western project of economic globalization.

Dewey should not be criticized because he did not understand how the metaphorical nature of language reproduces earlier culturally-based misconceptions (though Nietzsche had written about this in the eighteen eighties). It’s also debatable whether he should be judged for ignoring the writings of Edward Sapir on how different languages reproduce different cultural ways of knowing (Sapir’s paper on “The Status of Linguistic as a Science” was presented in 1929). But whether his understanding of tradition should be criticized should be beyond debate. In addition to his support of scientifically based technologies that have enclosed many aspects of the cultural and environmental commons, it was his arguments about the non-intelligent nature of traditions that places nearly his entire social justice agenda in opposition to sustaining what remains of the world’s diverse commons.

As many current followers of Dewey share his ethnocentric assumptions, and view any criticism of Dewey as “bashing”, it is necessary here to give a more extended account of how Dewey understood the nature of “tradition”—which is a metaphor that still encodes for many progressive thinkers the Enlightenment analogues that represent traditions as maintaining the status quo, special privileges, and backwardness (which is the case in terms of some but not all traditions). Like the formulaic pattern of dichotomous thinking found in the writings of Freire and Gadotti, Dewey represents experimental inquiry as the opposite of tradition. And in not understanding the complex and largely taken-for-granted nature of tradition, Dewey failed to recognize that his anti-tradition way of thinking is itself a long standing tradition in the West.

If one reads between the lines, it becomes clear that Dewey relied upon a non-explicitly developed understanding of tradition in order to account for the non-problematic aspects of daily experience. He also acknowledges that past ideas and practices that are part of the experience being reconstructed may be incorporated into the formation of the hypothesis that is to be tested in action. But he avoids complicating his epistemology by not acknowledging that most of daily experience –writing from left to right (in English speaking cultures), using a subject-verb-object pattern of writing and speaking, re-enacting the cultural message system of non-verbal communication, assumptions about the importance of separation of church and state, valuing literacy, promoting the traditions of thinking that underlie Western science and technology—including the myth that technology is simply a neutral tool, and so on, are examples of traditions. If he had given attention to the role of traditions in daily life, as well as the traditions of other cultures, he would have recognized that some traditions are sources of empowerment, some change too slowly while others are displaced before we realize how important they were—such as the right to privacy, and now the undermining of separation of church and state. He would have also recognized that some traditions were unjust from the outset (indeed he writes about the unjust nature of capitalism in Liberalism and Social Action (1935); and he might have come to the insight that some people make the opposite mistake to the one he makes. While they assume wrongly that traditions do not change, he assumes wrongly that everything is in a state of change. Because he brings the existence of traditions in the back door--so to speak, where their complex nature does not have to be recognized, he is unable to ask the most important question raised by the industrial culture he celebrates: namely, what traditions need to be conserved and renewed that contribute to the commons as sites of resistance to the industrial culture that reduces both nature and people either to an exploitable resource or to an exploitable market?

Instead of being a careful observer of the cultural patterns enacted in daily experience, Dewey chose instead to treat both experimental inquiry and traditions as theoretical abstractions in his writings. Thus, in Democracy and Education (1916) he equates traditions with habits, and almost gets it right when he states that habits involve the “formation of intellectual and

emotional disposition as well as in ease, economy, and efficiency of action.” 16 He then goes on to stake out a position that he restates over and over again:

Habits reduce themselves to routine ways of acting, or degenerate into ways of action to which we are enslaved just in the degree in which intelligence is disconnected from them. Routine habits are unthinking habits; ‘bad’ habits are habits so severed from reason that they are opposed to the conclusions of conscious deliberation and decision. As we have seen, the acquiring of habits is due to an original plasticity of our natures; to our ability to vary responses till we find an appropriate and efficient way of acting. Routine habits, and habits that possess us instead of our possessing them, are habits that put an end to plasticity. 17

And in Reconstruction in Philosophy, traditions are explained as man’s efforts to preserve past experiences. Rather than use specific traditions such as the traditions of habeas corpus, trial by a jury of peers, the presumption of innocence until proven guilty, Dewey makes the sweeping and culturally uninformed generalization that traditions are only a source of memory—and that “the primary life of memory is emotional rather than intellectual and practical.” 18 In The Quest for Certainty (1929), Dewey explains the nature of tradition in a way that no follower of his would want to acknowledge that some traditions are sources of community empowerment and self-sufficiency. There he writes that “knowledge which is merely a reduplication in ideas of what exists already in the world merely affords us the satisfaction of a photograph, but that is all.” 19

Dewey represents intelligence (experimental inquiry) as the opposite of tradition (habit) just as Freire represents critical inquiry as the opposite of passing on intergenerational knowledge. What is important to keep in mind in assessing the relevance of these two theories for helping to sustain the commons is that neither one took account of specific traditions that

16. John Dewey. Democracy and Education. (New York: Macmillan, 1996), p. 57.

17. *Ibid.*, p. 58.

18. John Dewey. Reconstruction in Philosophy. p. 2.

19. John Dewey. The Quest for Certainty. (New York: Capricorn Edition, 1960). p. 137.

were sources of empowerment within their own cultures , or the traditions of other cultures. Dewey, the celebrated champion of democracy and of making experience an integral part of experimental inquiry, ends up promoting another set of abstractions that provide legitimacy for the neo-liberal corporate interests in conditioning the public to equate constant technological change with progress. Furthermore, the influence of Dewey and Freire on the current generation of their followers can also be seen in how differences in the knowledge systems of other cultures are totally ignored in their prescriptions for educational reform. Peter McLaren, for example, responded to my efforts to explain the danger of ignoring how such indigenous cultures as the Quechua of the Peruvian Andes were sustaining the commons by claiming that I was re-introducing the notion of the “noble savage”.²⁰ Another influential follower of the idea that education should foster constant change (or as it is now known in the field as “transformative learning”) is Henry Giroux. Writing in EDucate!, a journal published in Pakistan, he recommended that teachers should become transformative intellectuals by developing “a discourse that unites the language of critique with the language of possibility, so that social educators can recognize that they can make changes”²¹ Edmund O’Sullivan’s Transformative Learning: Educational Vision for the 21st Century is yet another example of how the idea of change continues, in the Deweyian and Freirean tradition of thinking, to be central to the current discourse of supposedly radical and social-justice educational theorists,²² It needs to be reiterated here that the industrial culture, in its never-ending need to create new markets by introducing new technologies as well as commoditizing more aspects of the commons, is now the greatest transformative force in the world. And like the followers of Dewey and Freire, the neo-liberals ideologues of economic globalization are silent about conserving traditions in the areas of civil liberties , intergenerational knowledge of how to live less consumer dependent lives, and the cultural/linguistic diversity so essential to conserving biodiversity.

20. Peter McLaren and Donna Houston. “The Nature of Amnesia: A Response to C. A. (Chet) Bowers.” *Educational Studies*. 2005. (Vol. 37. No. 2), pp. 196-205.

21. Henry Giroux. “Teachers as Transformatory (sic) Intellectuals.” (EDucate. July-Sept. 2002, Vol. 1, No. 2) pp. 46-49

22. Edmund O’Sullivan. Transformative Learning for the 21st Century. London: Zed Books.

Ways of Knowing Essential to Revitalizing the Commons as Sites of Resistance to Globalization and Environmental Degradation. Rather than attempting to address the problem of globalization and the ecological crisis by relying upon the theories of Dewey and Freire, we should retain those aspects of their theories that were part of the Western tradition of thought before the non-historically informed followers of Dewey and Freire assumed that they were originators of these ideas. Critical reflection, which can be traced back at least to Socrates, needs to be practiced, but within an entirely different set of priorities. That is, critical reflection is essential to making explicit traditions as well as new economic, technological and political developments that undermine what remains of the cultural and environmental commons. For example, critical reflection is essential to clarifying what is wrong with E. O. Wilson's argument that evolution should become the new "master" narrative that all cultures should adopt, and that scientists should make the decision about which cultural practices and values should be retained.²³ Wilson's hubris led him to overlook the racism that was part of the earlier scientific efforts to measure intelligence, as well as the eugenics movement of the nineteen twenties and thirties. The current efforts to reverse the gains in the labor movement, to genetically alter seeds so that they are sterile—thus forcing the farmer to purchase seeds for the next year's planting, should also be subjected to critical reflection. In terms of these examples, critical reflection helps to bring to attention what is being overturned—that is, the traditions that need to be renewed and carried forward.

Democratic decision-making as well as dialogue were understood and practiced long before Dewey and Freire incorporated them into their theories. And they need to be retained, especially since they are essential to local decision-making about how to sustain the commons. However, the idea that each individual (Freire) and each generation (Dewey) should reconstruct the problematic aspects of community by relying solely upon the modes of thinking that are also the sources of scientific/technological innovation and the growing hegemony of capitalism must now be questioned. Similarly, the idea that reading the various proposals for an environmental ethic, such as Aldo Leopold's "Land Ethic" or the collection of essays in Environmental Ethics (edited by Andrew Light

23. E. O. Wilson. Consilience: The Unity of Knowledge. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf. 1998), pp. 264-265.

and Holmes Rolston III, 2003),²⁴ will lead to the actual daily practice of an environmental ethic should also be questioned. Reading may lead to energetic discussions in the classroom, but it may be less effective in terms of living in ways that have a smaller ecological foot print than learning to prepare a meal from wholesome ingredients, to repair a roof, to play an instrument, to return work and thus help a neighbor, to develop a talent under the guidance of a mentor, to plant a garden, and so forth. What is often overlooked in our reading-oriented culture, which is now being transformed by computer-mediated literacy, is that the daily enactment of the knowledge and practices that sustain the commons represents the practice of an environmental ethic. Moreover, if theorists and critics of globalization are to avoid the double binds inherent in the ideas of Dewey and Freire they will need to acquire a more complex understanding of the nature of tradition—their own as well as those of other cultures.

The commons are not a theoretical abstraction. Rather, their many dimensions exist in the knowledge, embodied experiences, practices, and patterns of moral reciprocity that characterize those aspects of daily life that have not been co-opted by the market. The commons vary from culture to culture, but a key feature of all the world's diverse commons is that they are not created anew by each generation or by individuals who rely exclusively on critical reflection. "Tradition" is the best word for describing the varied characteristic of the commons—with some of the traditions being sources of injustice and environmental degradation while others contribute to community self-sufficiency and are sources of resistance to globalization (sometimes within the same culture). Instead of continuing to be captives of the Enlightenment thinkers' narrow and culturally uninformed understanding of tradition, which been passed down over generations and reproduced in the thinking of many current progressive theorists, there is a need to learn about the traditions carried on within what remains of the local commons—traditions that include the language of moral reciprocity and that sustains the memory of the civil institutions and practices that are safeguards against the forces of fascism and economic exploitation that are now again on the rise.

The failure of both progressive theorists such as Dewey and Freire, as well as university and public school teachers, to examine the complex nature of traditions, and to help students learn to assess traditions in terms of whether they contribute to morally coherent and ecologically sustainable commons, has had at least two undesirable consequences: one being

24. Andrew Light and Holmes Rolston III. Environmental Ethics. (Malden, MA: Blackwell. 2003).

the silence on the part of progressive theorists about the importance of determining which aspects of the commons that need to be conserved and renewed. The other consequence is that the silence and widespread misunderstanding of the complex nature of tradition now underlies the thinking of fundamentalist Christians and other extremists who hold that traditions should not be changed—and that the present must be made to fit their interpretations of the past (even while they support the expansion of economic globalization). The challenge will be to realign our political language in ways that take account of what sustains the commons as sites of resistance to the further expansion of capitalist forces, and thus to escape the linguistic hegemony that Dewey, Freire, and their followers accepted so readily.

Chapter 4 Philosophers, the Titanic Mind-Set, and the Marginalization of the Cultural Commons –Putting Us on a Collision Course with Environmental Limits

There are two questions that come to mind whenever I attempt to engage a university colleague in a discussion about the nature and importance of the cultural and environmental commons. The first is: Why is it so difficult for environmentalists and social reformers to recognize that the commons-oriented lifestyle that is ecologically sustainable is already being practiced in most communities around the world? The second question is: Given the mind-set that most public school teachers and university professors share with the men who designed and steered the Titanic into an iceberg, will they be able to change course when they finally become aware of the catastrophic consequences accompanying global warming? The first question should lead to recognizing that there are grounds for hope of achieving a sustainable future. Given the key elements of the Titanic mind-set, such as the hubris derived from long-held Western cultural myths, the answer to the second question is that it is unlikely that the hegemonic culture of the West will change course in time. This hubris will, in turn, lead to the collapse of other cultures as the ecosystems they depend upon begin to fail at an increasing rate.

The chief connection between the two questions has to do with the historical roots of the Titanic mind-set; particularly how earlier influential Western philosophers and political theorists influenced the distinction that Western universities now make between high and low status knowledge—a distinction that is reproduced by most public school teachers. The high status knowledge was, and continues to be, the basis of the industrial/scientific way of thinking that produced the Titanic as well the majority of today’s technologies that are putting us on the collision course of exceeding what the Earth’s natural systems can sustain. These early philosophers and political theorists set the intellectual and moral agenda through the language they used, as well as by the silences required by their theories. The combination of their ideas and analogies became the dominant discourses among the West’s industrially oriented elites and, for reasons that are difficult to explain, the dominant way of thinking of men and women who possess only a surface knowledge of the writings of these philosophers. And in many instances, the knowledge of the latter group is limited to words and phrases, taken out of historical context, that are used to justify world shaping economic and political policies. Words and phrases such as “freedom,” “free-markets,” “the invisible hand,” “private property,” “individualism,” “progress,”

“natural resource,” “survival of the fittest” (now replaced by “Darwinian fitness”) and so on, can be traced back to the ethnocentric thinking of the West’s most influential thinkers. The widespread silences in the thinking of today’s public school teachers and university professors about the nature of traditions, the cultural and environmental commons, cultural differences in ways of knowing, and the complexity and importance of intergenerational knowledge (including the many ways in which it is renewed) can also be traced back to the silences and biases that have been part of the largely unrecognized legacy of Western philosophers and political theorists. While the process of how complex systems of thinking passed on in university classes becomes reduced to the guiding metaphors that politicians and members of the public rely upon cannot be fully explained, it is nevertheless important to begin the task of identifying the sources of the biases and silences that now are putting us on a collision course with the environment.

The micro-ecology of words, analogies, and interpretative frameworks that are the basis of today’s discourses, always have a history. To be more specific, they have their origins in earlier culturally specific ways of thinking. We may not be able to explain the direct causal connections between the language/thought processes of earlier theorists, but there is one thing of which we can be certain. The conduit view of language promoted in our public schools and universities has conditioned the public, including today’s intellectual elites as well as the Christian fundamentalist and NASCAR sub-cultures, to ignore how the thought patterns and values of the past continue to be the basis of how most people think. The conduit view of language sustains one of the myths that impedes the ability of most educators at all levels to recognize that the high-status forms of knowledge will replicate the fate of the Titanic –but on a vastly larger scale. In effect, the conduit view of language reinforces the naïve understanding that language is part of a sender/receiver process of communication. This myth, in turn, is essential to sustaining other myths, including the idea of objective data and information—as though neither have their origins in human observation and interpretation. Other myths that the conduit view of language helps to obscure include the idea of the rational process as free of cultural influence, the autonomous nature of the individual (at least, that is the goal to be attained through education), that machines serve as the best model for understanding organic processes,

While it is impossible to establish a direct causal link between the micro-linguistic ecologies created by philosophers such as Plato and Descartes, who made a virtue of abstract and ethnocentric thinking, and the way their early vocabularies continue to be reproduced in today’s

Titanic mind-set, it is possible to provide an overview of how the silences and biases of these early theorists continue to marginalize an understanding of the nature and importance of the cultural and environmental commons. Perhaps, marginalize is not the best word here, as what the tradition of Western philosophers and political theorists accomplished was to help perpetuate a prejudice against the forms of knowledge and interdependent face-to-face relationships that exist largely outside of a money economy. Most important is that these prejudices stand in the way of recognizing the diversity of cultural patterns and relationships that hold the promise of a sustainable existence.

The suggestion that the ideas, values, and silences encoded in the language that has come down to us from influential philosophers of the distant past continue to influence how powerful groups think today may imply that I am making an argument for linguistic determinism. This is definitely not the case. As all languages are metaphorical in nature, with the process of analogic thinking being framed by the root metaphors (mythopoetic narratives and powerful evocative experiences that differ from culture to culture), and with image words that encode the key idea or model of thinking derived from the analogy that survived over others, language and the accompanying need for analogic thinking, are always changing. Some change faster than others. A form of linguistic determinism does occur when the language, and the conceptual templates it reproduces, are taken-for-granted. For example, when current thinkers take-for-granted that machines provide the best interpretative framework for understanding the mental/cultural processes of the brain, they are complicit in perpetuating the misconceptions encoded in the language handed down from the past—and in this case, the failure of Newton, Kepler, and the other founders of the scientific revolution to recognize the limitations of reducing all forms of life to what fits an mechanistic explanatory framework.

Complicity in reproducing the misconceptions of the past takes on added importance when we consider the ways in which the industrial/consumer-oriented culture continues to transform the intergenerational knowledge that sustains the cultural and environmental commons into new exploitable markets. Although the boundaries between the two cultures, the cultural commons and the industrial culture that requires reliance on a money economy, are not absolute, there are fundamental differences in their respective impacts on the self-renewing capacity of natural systems. Participating in both subcultures, including the ways in which they are interdependent, often involves taking-for-granted the values and ideas that are at the core of both

cultures—even when these ideas and values are in direct conflict with each other. To make this point in a more concrete manner, most people participate in the intergenerational approaches to the preparation and sharing of a meal, while at other times frequenting the neighborhood fast-food outlet. Thinking about the differences in the experiences--such as in social relationships, development of skills, the adverse impact on the environment, and dependence upon a money economy is seldom given more than superficial attention. In the areas of the creative arts, healing practices, crafts, and so forth, there are similar differences between the largely non-monetized cultural commons and the monetized industrial/consumer dependent culture. Yet, the taken-for-granted state of consciousness results in moving between these two subcultures without an awareness of how one is a source of personal and community empowerment while the other leads to different forms of dependency. The tacit (taken-for-granted) nature of how most individuals experience everyday life is directly connected to the languaging processes of the culture into which they are born. If individuals are not aware that the language they rely upon in everyday activities influences what they will be aware of, what will be taken for granted, and what will exist as the culture's zones of silence, they will be less likely to recognize what is ecologically sustainable, and what is putting them on a collision course with environmental limits.

The commons and enclosure are two words that have their origins in the distant past, and which were and still are absent from the vocabularies of the West's most influential philosophers. While a few people understand the commons as encompassing the features of the natural environment that are shared outside of a money economy, the cultural commons are far more complex and even less understood. Unfortunately, this lack of understanding results in many scientists promoting the idea that science offers the best approach to understanding the nature of the ecological crises, and that their many approaches to environmental restoration provide the best hope for a sustainable future. This way of thinking ignores that science can only provide half-way solutions, and that the revitalization of the cultural commons is equally important to reducing the human impact on natural systems. When we consider the many ways in which the diversity of the world's cultural commons are being integrated into the market economy that operates, with few exceptions, without any sense of environmental or moral limits we can see the problem of lacking the vocabulary necessary for making explicit and thus politically problematic the cultural patterns that are making people more dependent upon

consumerism. Enclosure is one of these key words that brings to the level of awareness what other words, such as “exploit,” “alienate” “profits,” “capitalism,” and so forth, attempt to clarify. Because these other words too often are framed by an ideological orientation that assumes that all traditions must be overturned, they fail to clarify either the nature of the world’s diverse cultural commons, and how they represent daily practices that have a smaller adverse ecological impact.

Enclosure is a word that should be understood as inseparable from the word commons. Life in the commons is always in danger of being enclosed; that is, being transformed in ways that create dependencies, exclusions, silences, exploitation, and environmentally destructive activities and relationships. Enclosure in more ancient times took the form of status systems, the privilege and rights of the nobility, armed struggle, and mythopoetic narratives. In its modern form, enclosure is achieved through private and corporate ownership, as well as by approaches to education that promote a form of individualism that lacks the skills and knowledge that are part of the intergenerational knowledge that sustains the cultural commons. Various modern ideologies that carry forward the Enlightenment prejudice toward traditions are also sources of enclosure. The combination of scientific, technological, and corporate interests that view the enclosure of the commons as leading to progress and greater economic opportunities is a more recent development. What is important about the language necessary for making explicit both the complex nature of the commons and the equally complex processes of enclosure is that it is not part of the linguistic heritage (that is, the high-status vocabulary) that can be traced back to the thinking of Western philosophers and political theorists—at least those who are the mainstay of university courses where the possibility of acquiring a more ecologically sustainable language has been enclosed by the linguistic traditions that go back at least to Plato.

In order to establish a comparison between the language and conceptual biases that are part of the heritage of Western thinkers and the language necessary for naming the activities and relationships of the cultural commons it is first necessary to identify different aspects of the cultural commons. It is important to keep in mind that this partial list would be greatly expanded if we take into account of the nearly 6000 thousand languages still spoken today (with close to a third on the verge of extinction) and the knowledge of the local cultural and environmental commons these languages carried forward over countless generations. Naming different aspects of the cultural commons include: the words that identify the many processes and relationships

related to the gathering, preparation, and sharing of food; the many words connected with the creative arts and their role in the narrative and ceremonies of the community; the many words connected with the skills, relationships, and patterns of moral reciprocity connected with built environments; the words that illuminate the many forms of mentoring and moral values passed on in these relationships; the words that clarify the nature of intergenerational responsibility—for renewing the wisdom and traditions (such as habeas corpus in our culture) in ways that do not diminish the prospects of future generations; the words that establish for members of the commons what constitutes moral responsibility toward the non-human forms of life as well as carry forward the skills and technologies that have a smaller disruptive impact on the self-renewing capacity of the natural systems of the bioregion. In many of the indigenous cultures where survival is dependent upon intergenerational renewal both of the cultural and environmental commons there is also a special vocabulary that names the members of the community that have responsibilities, such as “keepers,” and “elders.” They also possess complex vocabularies for representing sacred practices and places.

The question that arises as the rate of global warming moves from scientific debate to the experiential level of devastating storms and radical changes in habitats is: What are the historical roots in the West of the language and the accompanying patterns of thinking that have contributed to marginalizing an awareness of the importance of the world’s diverse cultural commons to a sustainable future? In order to avoid the impression that the question reflects a romanticized understanding of the cultural and environmental commons, it is important to acknowledge Jared Diamond’s study of how the intergenerational knowledge of many cultures, in failing to take account of the special characteristics of the bioregions they depended upon, ended in collapse. It also needs to be kept in mind that what we regard today as oppressive practices and relationships may also be part of a culture’s commons that are intergenerationally renewed through narratives, ceremonies, and everyday discourse.

The question about the historical roots of marginalization is important for another reason. That is, as we begin to examine the silences and prejudices encoded in the vocabularies used by influential Western philosophers and political theorists it becomes easier to recognize how contemporary academics continue to perpetuate the same silences and prejudices that make it difficult for people to recognize the alternatives to a consumer dependent existence that still exist in communities across America. While it is impossible to prove that Western philosophers

directly influenced different characteristics of the Titanic mind-set that is moving us full speed ahead toward ecological collapse, it is nevertheless useful to recognize parallels between the ideas of the West's supposed great thinkers to which generations of university students have been exposed and the widely taken-for-granted patterns of thinking that underlie today's environmentally destructive drive to integrate what remains of the world's diverse cultural and environmental commons into a money, profit-oriented economy.

The silences, assumptions, and prejudices that can be found in some of the West's most influential thinkers and in the Titanic mind-set include the following:

Marginalizing the importance of local context. The Titanic mind-set involves multiple ways in which local contexts are either entirely ignored or viewed as subject to being transformed by the introduction of rationally constructed systems. These systems may take the form of technologies such as dams; the introduction of synthetic chemicals and genetically modified seeds. They may also include political systems such as the recent efforts to introduce a Western style of democracy into tribal and Islamic cultures; economic models of development; rational approaches to problem solving that fail to take account of local knowledge; imposition of Western languages on non-Western cultures; and the acceptance of the loss of local knowledge about the sustainable characteristics of the bioregion.

Privileging abstract systems of representation over oral, face-to-face communication. Both philosophers and today's promoters of the Titanic mind-set value the following characteristics associated with literacy and other systems of abstract representation: rational thought as a culture-free activity of the autonomous individual; critical inquiry that leads to technical problem solving and to overturning cultural traditions; the acceptance of abstract ideas and theories that are assumed to have universal validity; the acceptance that what cannot be digitized and communicated through a computer has no importance; giving highest priority to reducing experience to what can be quantified; viewing oral traditions as inferior to literacy and as the expression of cultural backwardness.

Viewing the individual as an autonomous thinker and source of moral judgments. This Western view of individualism includes: privileging the uniqueness and authority of the individual's perspective on an external world; the individual as the source of rational ideas and values; the idea that ownership of property and reducing the environment to an exploitable resource is an individual's inalienable right; an absolute sense of entitlement to making judgments regardless of

whether they are based on credible knowledge; a strong tendency to place the interests of the individual over the interests of the community and the self-renewal characteristics of the environment; a disregard for recognizing and for improving upon the legacy of the cultural commons that sustains daily life—including the civil liberties that are now being threatened by the men and women who share a common ideology that promotes profits over all else.

Change is an inherently progressive force that requires the further enclosure of the cultural commons. The chief characteristics include: an uncritical acceptance of new ideas and technologies--except when they stand in the way of newer ideas and technologies, expert systems as improvement over local knowledge that is seen as too slow to change; an indifference to the importance of the cultural and environmental commons that are being lost through the introduction of market-oriented technologies; a missionary zeal for imposing the Western understanding of progress on other cultures; promoting the Western idea that students' should construct their own knowledge by relying upon the same critical inquiry that also underlies technological innovations that too often fail to take account of the local cultural context—including traditions of self-sufficiency.

Ethnocentrism as a core feature of educational systems based on the assumptions they are more “evolved” than non-Western approaches to education. This feature of the Titanic mind-set and of influential Western philosophers includes the following assumptions: students should be exposed only to the ideas, technologies, values, and achievements of the most developed cultures; the Social Darwinian assumption underlying this prejudice can be seen in how even some students taking anthropology courses often argue that “we cannot go back” as though cultures can be identified as being located on a linear path where development leads from a primitive beginning to different stages in the process of cultural evolution; the combination of ethnocentrism and Social Darwinism that underlies the privileging of abstract knowledge systems over face-to-face intergenerational traditions of knowledge—such as privileging literacy over orality and, now, computer mediated knowledge over mentoring and the wisdom of elders.

What can be monetized is more important than non-monetized activities and relationships. This characteristic of the Titanic mind-set values turning what remains of the cultural and environmental commons into new commodities and new market opportunities; it holds that there are no moral limits on what can be monetized and integrated into the industrial system of production and consumption; it equates progress with gains in consumerism and going further in

debt as individuals and as a nation; and it promotes greater dependence upon an industrial/consumer dependent existence by omitting from the educational process a knowledge of the cultural commons that provides alternatives to consumerism.

Not all of the above characteristics are to be rejected. There are circumstances where different ways of understanding individualism, the use of abstract systems of representations—including print, the efforts to achieve progress over previously held traditions and practices, and the use of a money economy, are highly useful. On the other hand, ethnocentrism and the failure to take local contexts into account can never be justified. The chief problem with the characteristics of the Titanic mind-set, to which the history of Western thinkers has contributed, is the lack of balance and thus an awareness of the complexity of the world's diverse cultural and environmental commons. Until recently the awareness of the interdependencies of individuals, cultures, and the sustainable characteristics of ecosystems has been largely absent in the thinking of Western philosophers and political theorists. The silences, prejudices, and culturally uninformed approaches to the nature of knowledge, as well as what leads to progress and the good society, can be partly explained as the philosophers' inability to recognize how the cultural assumptions they took-for-granted influenced what they proposed as overcoming the limitations of their times. As we will see in the following discussion of how philosophers and political theorists influenced what is discussed in today's classrooms, some of these theorists introduced radical departures in how to think about the source of knowledge, the nature of individualism, the right to private property and to exploiting the environment for profit, and the qualities of those who should govern others, and so forth. Common to all of the radical ideas that were introduced, and which current professors seem largely unaware of, include the ethnocentrism, the silences about the connections between the cultural and environmental commons, and living a sustainable existence—and the silence about how many indigenous cultures had already learned to live within the sustainable limits of their bioregions.

The identification of ideas central to the Titanic mind-set, as well as the possible origins of these ideas, should not lead to the conclusion that the ultimate responsibility for putting our culture on a collision course with the limits of the Earth's natural systems lies with the Western philosophers and political theorists. There are too many other influences on the legacy of Western philosophy handed down over the generations that make it impossible to assign final responsibility. Certainly, the failure of successive generations of modern professors continue to

be culpable in reinforcing a mind-set that fails to recognize that the ecological crises reflects the long standing crisis in the Western culture's ethnocentric and anthropocentric way of thinking. Another problem that now needs to be taken into account, and it has to do with how today's political discourse continues to be influenced by the use of slogans borrowed from past philosophers and political theorists. Slogans about the efficacy of "free markets," "democracy," "economic development," "individualism," and "science" as the only self-correcting approach to knowledge, as the late Carl Sagan put it, need to be understood as the age-old problem in the West of context-free thinking. As this pattern of thinking is leading us down a politically and environmentally slippery slope, one would expect that academics at all levels would begin to address it. But like the current misuse of our political language by graduates of schools of journalism, which journalism professors continue to ignore, the problem continues. Labeling market liberals as conservatives must surely confuse people about what is essential to conserve, such as species and habitats and our civil liberties—among others. Even for the more socially justice oriented segment of society, there is a widespread reluctance to acknowledge what needs to be conserved. They prefer to use the political vocabulary of liberalism, and to ignore that the mantra of the scientific/industrial culture is "progress"—which is what has been used to give moral legitimacy to various expressions of liberalism.

Plato's influence on the formation of the Titanic mind-set can actually be documented by comparing the ideas of Leo Strauss with key ideas presented in The Republic. These ideas, which Strauss has passed on to many of the current proponents of President George W. Bush's domestic and foreign policies—along with the idea of relying upon the fundamentalist Christians as a primary base of support, include the following: that a small elite group of thinkers capable of understanding and being guided by universal Truths should be the governing class; that this governing elite should use lies as a political strategy for ensuring that the lower classes perform the function they are best suited for; that the ruling elite is not accountable to the people they govern; and given that only the ruling elite possesses the capacity of discerning the eternal Truths, the other classes should be guided by the myths of religion that will hold in check any idea that the members of the lower class should seek to be self-governing—an illusion that both Plato and Strauss viewed as leading to the tyranny of the unqualified. Strauss's reading of Plato has had a direct influence on the thinking of President George W, Bush, his advisors, and on the thinking of several members of the Supreme Court. While it is possible to see evidence of Plato's

ideas being put into practice today, the real responsibility for the disastrous consequences of trying to implement them must be assigned to Strauss, his many followers in Bush's administration, and in the market-liberal think tanks that are incorrectly labeled as conservative.

The features of Plato's thinking that are less easily judged as having a direct influence on today's world include his arguments that pure reason is the only approach to knowledge, that poetry and narratives undermine the rational process by fostering human emotions and loyalties to local traditions, and that the characteristics of justice transcend place, time, and the diversity of cultures—and thus are not subject to local democracy. Yet it is these aspects of Plato's thinking that are such a prominent characteristic of the Titanic mind-set that is on a collision course with extinction. To restate Plato's core ideas in more contemporary terms, by arguing that knowledge cannot be derived from the constantly changing nature of cultural experience he gives support to the current idea that abstract knowledge is a more reliable guide to living in a culturally diverse world and environmentally changing world. Furthermore, his arguments about what he regarded as the mis-educational nature of poetry and narratives have now become the conventional wisdom of many of today's educational elites who regard oral traditions and thus oral-based cultures as backward and in need of modern development—which is the code phrase for acquiring the ability to rely upon abstract thinking.

Another current way of thinking can be traced back to the importance that Plato gave to the idea that the individual has a psyche—an idea that may have had its origins in the thinking of Socrates. The Homeric mind, which Plato opposed, was shaped through identification with the exemplary figures passed on through the epic narratives. These narratives also served as the storehouse of what was expected of a citizen, of the nature and proper use of technologies, and of the moral imperatives of the group. The Homeric mind did not reinforce the idea that individuals should have their own convictions and be self-guiding through the exercise of rational thought. Plato's introduction of the idea of “sheer thinking” required a redefinition of the self where memory and identification with the exemplary acts of Homeric culture give way to the idea of the autonomy of individual thought (a capacity that only a select few possessed). Rational thought as sheer thinking thus required the idea of an autonomous agent—that is, a knowing subject and the idea of an external world that is separate from the knower. Plato solved this problem by claiming that only the guardians possessed the capacity to “contemplate the realities themselves as they are forever in the same unchanging state.” This idea of unchanging ideas

would give way in modern times to the relativity of individual interpretation. However, the idea that there is an inner space where thinking occurs still survives, and is further buttressed by the Judeo-Christian idea of an individual soul that she/he is accountable for.

If the importance of abstract thinking, as well as the separation of the knower from the known, needed to be reinforced after centuries of the Scholastic philosopher's focus on the nature and moral implications of a God-centered world, it was Rene Descartes who came to the rescue. Again, the question arises as to whether Descartes anticipated or was adopted by generations of thinkers who shared the same legacy of thinking that can now be recognized as the Titanic mind-set. He is most often associated with the dualism of mind and matter which we can now recognize as a restatement of an assumption that can be traced back to Plato.

This seventeenth century mathematician and philosopher was adamant in holding that nothing could be learned from the past—including the philosophers who preceded him. He further rejected all cultural knowledge systems that did not fit his mechanistic model of the universe. This was not made explicit in his writings as he, like most recent philosophers, simply ignored the knowledge systems of other cultures. His argument that the fundamental characteristics of a machine, which he extended to both organic and non-organic entities, excluded a concern with moral values except those found in the religion of his day. This meant that the anthropocentrism that was a core feature of the dominant religion excluded any possibility of a land ethic that would guide people's lives, which had already been achieved by many indigenous cultures such as the Western Apache and the Quechua.

Aside from his certainty of the existence of God, the only other certainty he acknowledged was summed up in his famous phrase "cogito, ergo sum" (I think, therefore I am). By rejecting previous knowledge and by positing that a deductive form of rationalism was the only reliable approach to knowledge, Descartes added to the twin misconceptions that the individual is an autonomous thinker (except for the influence of God), and that individuals are universally the same. Descartes anticipated (influenced?) another characteristic of the Titanic mind-set, which is that the deductive approach to rationality yields knowledge that is universally valid. That is, Descartes assumed that if all individuals relied upon the same approach to rationality they would arrive at the same conclusions. It is important to note, however, that his deductive approach differs radically from the experimental approach of modern science.

While Plato's ideas were part of the tradition that Descartes rejected, he nevertheless reinforced many of the ways of thinking that can be found in Plato's theory of Ideas-- and thus what constitutes justice. The shared similarities between Plato and Descartes can also be seen as central to the Titanic mind-set of today. They include the following assumptions and silences: that when individuals the world over share the same approach to the rational process they will arrive at the same conclusions; that human existence, when guided by rational thought, will continue to progress regardless of the degraded condition of the environment; that the mythopoetic narratives that sustain different cultural ways of knowing should be abandoned in favor of the one-true approach to knowledge discovered by Western philosophers. It is interesting to note that E. O. Wilson makes the same argument in Consilience: The Unity of Knowledge (1998) when he claims that the world's religions represent an earlier survival strategy, and should now be replaced by the theory of evolution as the guiding metanarrative—and that scientists should determine which cultural beliefs and practices will meet the test of natural selection. Plato came the closest to recognizing the forms of knowledge that can be identified as part of the cultural commons. While he recognized the knowledge and manual skill of the craftsperson, he also held that it was inferior and thus lacking in wisdom. The silence shared by Plato, Descartes, and the Titanic mind-set also can be seen in how their hubris led them to ignore the idea of self-limitation for the sake of future generations.

Just as few contemporary professors of philosophy are likely to bring to the attention of students the ethnocentrism and anthropocentrism in the thinking of Plato and Descartes, students are likely to encounter the same silences when they are introduced to the core ideas of John Locke. These silences, which are based on cultural prejudices that most classical and contemporary philosophers failed to examine, were given a modern form of legitimation by the ideas of John Locke. Although most of today's politicians and even citizens will not have read and discussed Locke's Essay on Human Understanding, as well as his Two Treatises on Government, they nevertheless take-for-granted a simplified interpretation of several of Locke's key ideas. This is one of the mysteries of the Titanic mind-set; namely, how ideas and assumptions are intergenerationally passed along when people are unaware of their source—and of the historical/political circumstances to which the author was responding.

Locke was writing during a transition from royal absolutism to the Glorious Revolution that established a constitutional monarchy. This period was also characterized by advances in

science and a growing awareness of human freedom. What is particularly relevant to understanding how the ideas of Locke contributed to accelerating the enclosure of the commons, as well as how he further strengthened the idea that traditions (that is, intergenerational knowledge) are irrelevant if not a misleading source of knowledge, are his ideas about the nature and source of private property, the empirical basis of ideas, and a view of language that supported the misconception of language as a sender/receiver form of communication. Identifying the nature of the person, including the rights they possess as individuals, was a primary concern of Locke. In addition to arguing that only individuals have rights (including the right to overturn the government when it becomes too oppressive), he went on to argue that the labor of the individual is the basis of private property. He also held that one of the primary purposes of government is to protect the individual's property. He even articulated what has become a truism of today's market liberals when he wrote that the state "cannot take from any man his property without his consent." The individual's absolute sovereignty in the use and abuse of property is now a keystone belief of the Titanic mind-set.

Locke's other contributions to this mind-set include his argument that the individual's direct experience is the source of ideas—which he divided into simple and complex ideas. His argument that communication is a process of using words to convey one's thoughts to others has contributed to the still-held misconception of the role of language as a sender/receiver process of communication. In effect, this view of language as a conduit further hides the basic reality that language, as a complex mix of historical and current analogic thinking, frames thinking in accordance with the prevailing root metaphors. The conduit view of language leads people, including our elite thinkers, to ignore that words have a history, and that the taken-for-granted root metaphors (interpretative frameworks) frame the process of thinking in culturally specific ways. This misconception about the nature of language must be taken into account when considering why the ethnocentrism that has been such a prominent characteristic of Western philosophers has continued to be such a dominant characteristic of today's university educated politicians and citizens.

Just as the Titanic mind-set gives special standing to individual freedom, the sanctity of private property, and the progressive nature of rational thought, it also gives special standing to key ideas of Adam Smith that have become today's political clichés. As a pale echo of Plato's timeless Ideas, these clichés have also been given the status of timeless and universal truths.

Unfortunately, they further marginalize the possibility of recognizing the non-monetized relationships and activities that are central to the world's diverse cultural commons. In short the extrapolations from Smith's writings have been turned into universal truths that continue the tradition of ethnocentric and anthropocentric thinking that goes back to Plato and beyond.

Adam Smith's two major works, The Wealth of Nations and The Theory of Moral Sentiments are complex and, given the nearly half million words it took to lay out his economic theory, is too dense to hold the attention of most readers. Yet a few words and phrases from this lengthy tome have survived in a way that has altered modern consciousness and now serve to justify the process of economic globalization that threatens what remains of the world's cultural and environmental commons. The power of these words and phrases, "free trade," "laissez-faire," "the invisible hand," to "truck, barter, and trade," serve today to give further legitimacy to the ideas that the sanctity of private property, free competition, and the unrelenting pursuit of self-interest contribute to the overall well-being of society. That Smith's economic theory has been taken out of its historical context of how the local economy of Scotland was being limited by the mercantile policies of the king of England is only part of the story of how current misconceptions underlie today's taken-for-granted truths.

While Smith's idea that the prosperity of all is advanced as individuals pursue their individual interests has become a truism for today's market liberal politicians, the selective memory of today's university educated economists and politicians can be seen in how the other half of Smith's theory has been ignored. In The Theory of Moral Sentiments, Smith introduced a more complex view of human nature, one that represents human life as responsive to social needs other than the freedom to pursue wealth at the cost of everything else. For Smith, the innate need of humans that serves as a check on unrestrained competition in the market place is the desire to take the responses of others into account. That is, to be sensitive to the impact of one's behavior on others. What Smith viewed as an innate human characteristic was summed up in the following way:

Nature, when she formed man for society, endowed him with an original desire to please, and an original aversion to offend his brethren...She rendered their approbation most flattering and most agreeable to him for their own sake; and their disapprobation most mortifying and most offensive (p. 199).

This insight, as ethnocentric as it is, might have provided a way of recognizing the importance of mutual support and moral reciprocity that are core features of most cultural commons. It would have also provided an awareness that Smith understood the moral limits of the individual's pursuit of self-interest and an unrestrained form of capitalism. Unfortunately, this part of Smith's legacy has been largely overlooked with the result that it has been reduced to a series of slogans that are now used to justify the further exploitation of the cultural and environmental commons.

Not only has Smith's legacy become frozen in the slogans now used to justify economic globalization, it has, at the same time, become the linchpin in the market liberal ideology that is accelerating the rate of environmental degradation. A comparison between the values of the commons that meets Gregory Bateson's definition of a healthy cultural and environmental ecology and the values underlying the reductionist, out-of-context slogans derived from a partial reading of Smith's writings on free markets brings out the following. A sustainable cultural commons, as Bateson understood it, is governed by moral values that exclude the exploitation and marginalization of any of its members. Thus, it is characterized by cooperation, mutually supportive and largely non-monetized relationships and activities, renewing of intergenerational knowledge and skills, mutual trust, mentoring relationships, face-to-face accountability, use of local materials, markets that are local and that meet community needs, an awareness of environmental limits, and the need to conserve proven traditions that will contribute to the well-being of future generations. As many academics have only experienced the false plenitude of the market system, with its ideology of possessive individualism, they are unlikely to recognize the qualities that Bateson associates with the cultural commons that still exist among different groups within the community. The deeply engrained ethnocentrism that was part of their own education will lead most of them to reject the suggestion that there are cultures in the world where the cultural and environmental commons are the dominant feature, with markets being relegated to a particular location and on specific days of the week.

By way of contrast, the daily practices given legitimacy by the slogans derived from Smith's writings are driven by the life-long individual quest for material wealth, competition at all levels of social life, an emphasis on progress that fails to take account of what is being lost or the dangers that lie ahead, the need to expand markets and profits regardless of the adverse

impact on local communities, a view of the environment and other people as exploitable resources, and the continual quest for new technologies that will increase efficiencies and profits. As the deep cultural assumptions that underlie the free-market system of unlimited production, consumption and exploitation are reinforced at all levels of the educational system, as well as by the media, shopping malls, and the ever-present displays of personal wealth, the relationships and values that sustain the local cultural commons recede more into the background of community life. For the youth already addicted to acquiring the latest technology and consumer fad, and the middle age people still attempting to climb higher on the consumer pyramid, the local cultural commons are largely invisible—but often not to the older members of the community who seek the forms of supportive relationships and skill development missing in their years of working within the market-dominated system.

Just as key ideas of Plato, Descartes, Locke, and Smith are part of today's taken-for-granted Titanic mentality, several of John Stuart Mill's ideas have also attained special status as unquestioned truths. And again, like the others, while his ideas were articulated as a response to the circumstances of his time—which was governmental abuse, they have been taken out of context and now stand as universal “Truths” that all cultures should adopt in their march to becoming modern and economically developed. Mill's famous book, *On Liberty* (1859), was an eloquent defense of the importance of free speech and intellectual freedom, as well as a carefully crafted argument against governments that attempt to silence ideas viewed as threatening their power. As he wrote in *On Liberty*, “if all mankind minus one, were of one opinion, and only one person were of the contrary opinion, mankind would be no more justified in silencing that one person, than he, if he had the power, would be justified in silencing mankind.”

Mill understood that free expression is essential in a world where there are no absolute truths. For him, free expression, critical inquiry, and even misleading ideas are all part of the process of achieving a better understanding. As he put it, the first duty of the thinker “is to follow his intellect to whatever conclusion it may lead.” This dictum, which has been given greater authority by the largely unquestioned assumption that change is inherently progressive in nature, has been translated by today's market and social justice liberals to mean that freedom of speech and critical inquiry should lead to change—with the market liberals equating change with new technologies and markets. That these qualities of mind should also lead to clarifying why different traditions need to be conserved has largely been overlooked—or ridiculed as the

expression of a reactionary way of thinking. The way in which Mill's defense of free inquiry has been framed by the assumption that it should lead to change rather than in warranted cases to conserving the intergenerational knowledge (even wisdom) of the community is only one of the reasons that his ideas need to be considered as having the potential of undermining the traditions that sustain the commons. From the perspective of people who understand the cultural and environmental commons as essential to their cultural identity and traditions of relative self-sufficiency (and thus as sites of resistance to the unrelenting spread of market forces) Mill's defense of free speech could also be used to challenge the agenda of the market liberals who seek to replace the commons with consumer goods and services. Unfortunately, the failure of most public school teachers and university professors to be aware of the commons, as well as their largely uninformed prejudices that lead to viewing the conserving of traditions as reactionary in nature, has led to interpreting Mill's defense freedom of inquiry as a the rallying cry for questioning everything, and for living as though history has no influence—as two prominent advocates of educational reform recently put it.

There is another aspect of Mill's legacy that carries forward the ethnocentrism found in the thinking of Plato, Descartes, Locke, and Smith—and that still pervades most contemporary courses in philosophy, economics and political theory. Mill's arguments for freedom of inquiry, like the arguments of the other philosophers discussed here, failed to take account of the many approaches to renewing the knowledge, skills, and patterns of mutual support that can be found in different cultures—including the culture that Mill was embedded in and largely took for granted. His ethnocentrism can also be seen in his argument that the individual is the source of ideas, and that individuals should follow where critical reflection leads—even when critical reflection is based on the wrong assumptions. That is, Mill's defense of freedom of inquiry, which is undeniably important in certain contexts, also leads to representing individuals as autonomous and self-creating. This is a core idea of today's market liberals who understand that individual autonomy is a virtue in that it means that the individual, in lacking the skills and membership in the mutual support systems of the local commons, will be dependent upon consumerism to meet needs that range from food, health care, entertainment, sports, built environments, and group identity.

What Mill did not understand, and what is still not understood by people today who have been indoctrinated by the media and by educators who share the same cultural assumptions that

underlie the myth of unending progress, is that the idea of self-creating individuals is part of the West's mythic thinking. The idea of autonomy, at least for individuals who meet the conditions specific to what each philosopher took to be the nature and source of knowledge, was not based on an awareness of how the mythopoetic narratives of cultures are encoded in the interpretative frameworks that influence the processes of analogic thinking, and in the image metaphors that reflect which analogies and their underlying root metaphors prevailed over competing analogies. That is, Mill along with the other philosophers did not understand that when individuals are born into a language community their patterns of thinking will be heavily influenced by the assumptions carried forward in the image metaphors (words such as data, freedom, tradition, individualism, and so forth) and by the taken-for-granted interpretative frameworks that are shared by other members. If the reader doubts this claim, then she/he should consider the connections between the mythopoetic narratives in the Book of Genesis and how the language/thought patterns of today's supposedly autonomous individuals reproduced the myths of patriarchy and a human-centered universe that were taken-for-granted for several thousand years.

In addition to Mill's failure to recognize that the languaging systems of the culture that individuals are born into influences their patterns of thinking, body language, and ways of reproducing the material culture, he shared the ignorance of his day about the life forming characteristics of the natural environment. His theory of the individual's need for free inquiry reflected the silences and prejudices of his era. To reproduce those silences and prejudices today, as though they represent unqualified truths about the human condition and possibilities, puts us on a collision course with other cultures that have a tradition of adapting their cultural practices to what can be sustained by the bioregion they depend upon. His ideas, as they are promoted today, also contribute to the sense of hubris that characterizes the Titanic mind-set. What his approach to knowledge demonstrates, and which can be seen in the thinking of Plato and the other philosophers discussed here, is that he was unable to recognize the silences, prejudices, and taken-for-granted assumptions of his era—most of which centered on the inability to recognize the everyday patterns of the culture they lived in and that other cultures had different approaches to knowledge that should not have been interpreted as existing at a more primitive level of development.

Another characteristic of the Titanic mind-set can be traced back to the thinking of Herbert Spencer who combined key ideas from the writings of Locke and Smith with the emerging theory of evolution—thus, giving his arguments for a laissez-faire economy, and a survival of the fittest social ethic the legitimacy of science. This mid-nineteenth century advocate of the liberal agenda for restricting government in the areas of social welfare and business regulation, actually coined the phrase “survival of the fittest” that Charles Darwin later adopted. Spencer also carried forward the philosophic tradition of ethnocentric and anthropocentric thinking, as well as its silences about the nature and importance of the world’s diverse cultural commons. To his readers, he provided scientific legitimation to a prejudice long held by Western thinkers that cultures represent different stages of development, starting with pagan and illiterate cultures and moving to the most advanced culture that is Christian, literate, and in possession of experimental science and technology. For Spencer the industrial system represented the most advanced expression of social evolution, and it could only retain its adaptive edge by not interfering in the process of natural selection. As he put it, “pervading all nature we must see at work a stern discipline, which is a little cruel that it may be very kind.” To make his point more directly, society benefits as a whole from the elimination of the unfit—those who are not as competitive, who are sick or physically limited, and those who start life with limited opportunities.

Spencer’s ideas have not disappeared from today’s political discourse. And his Social Darwinism has not disappeared from today’s scientific discourse. It is now carried forward by the current efforts of E. O. Wilson, Richard Dawkins, and Daniel Dennett, among others, to explain how the cultural memes (which correspond to the genes of organisms) are subject to the same “stern discipline” of natural selection. Spencer’s Social Darwinism also underlies the current policies of market liberals who created the World Trade Organization, and have as the centerpiece of their political agenda the transference of wealth to those who have already succeeded in accumulating power and wealth, the privatizing of poverty and social disadvantages, limiting the role of government to promoting the further expansion of a free-market system, and expanding the role of the military in support of economic globalization.

The integration of classical liberal ideas with the theory of evolution also carried forward the tradition of thinking that can be traced back at least to Plato: that is, the idea that rationally based theory constituted by men who were ignorant of different cultural ways of knowing, as

well as ignorant of how the cultural and environmental commons represented alternatives to the environmentally destructive industrial system of production, should be, in the name of progress and development, imposed on the rest of the world. There is no more extreme expression of hubris than this. The Titanic was taken to be a prideful symbol of the correctness of this hubris. It represented the most advanced state of technology, the highest expression of luxury, and the ability of the industrial culture to dominate nature.

In assessing whether the traditions of philosophic thinking have influenced our current inability to address the cultural roots of the ecological crises, it is necessary to point out again that it is impossible to establish direct causal connections. As pointed out earlier, politicians and supposedly educated people continue to use phrases borrowed from the writings of philosophers they have not read in depth—or at all. And their way of thinking carries forward the same prejudice and silences. A deep knowledge of culture, as well as the ways of knowing and forms of ecological citizenship of other cultures, continue to be missing in the education of most university graduates. This may account for why such a large segment of Americans support the market liberal policies even when the policies undermine their community's traditions of self reliance. This collective myopia may also account for why nearly half of American voters fail to consider that the market liberal agenda of economic colonization is one of the causes for the armed resistance that is now being directed at the West.

The questions raised at the beginning need to be given more careful attention. If our educational institutions, including the trend setting elite universities, continue to reproduce the same silences, prejudices, and culturally uninformed patterns of thinking that can be found in the writings of Plato, Descartes, and the rest of the philosophers discussed here, then there is little likelihood that we will be able to change course in time to avert the collapse of sustainable ecosystems that many in the Third World are currently encountering. The issue is not whether students currently encounter philosophers and political theorists who actually accept the ideas of past philosophers as valid (though there are more than just the example of the followers of Leo Strauss). Rather, it's a matter of being introduced to the Western traditions of thinking by professors who are unaware of the silences and culturally uninformed prejudices that were passed on by their own mentors who were unaware of environmental limits and the ecological importance of the cultural and environmental commons. This process of carrying forward the misconceptions of the past is not a matter of speculation. As pointed out earlier, misconceptions

that can be traced back to the Book of Genesis about a patriarchal and anthropocentric world have only recently been challenged. And if we read Richard Rorty, John Dewey (who is being revived as an environmental philosopher even though the evidence points the other way), and if we consider the British tradition of analytic philosophy, we find the same silences and culturally uninformed ways of understanding that are being represented as having universal validity. And if we look at what students are learning in their political theory classes (if they should take one), we will find that they are unlikely to encounter a discussion of how our two most widely used political terms, liberal and conservative, are now used in an Orwellian fashion. Nor are they likely to learn that the use of liberal should take account of two distinct political agendas that are related at the level of deep cultural assumptions; with the market liberals being promoters of the classical liberal idea of free markets and a reduced role for government—and the social justice liberals concerned about issues of equal economic, political, and educational opportunity. Students are also not likely to learn how the current misuse of conservative and conservatism as the label for advocates of free markets and economic globalization, fails to take account of how environmentalists and people working to revitalize the cultural commons as alternatives to a consumer dependent existence are the genuine conservatives. They are also unlikely to learn that this form of community and intergenerationally-centered conservatism was first articulated by Edmund Burke and more recently by Wendell Berry. The failure of universities can be seen in the large percentage of university graduates who are willing to see their traditions of civil liberties, including habeas corpus, disappear in response to the politics of fear and outright demagoguery wrapped in the American flag.

The challenge is in knowing where to begin changing the ecological destructive course that our culture is on—which means, in part, determining where to begin persuading faculty across the disciplines that global warming is occurring and the chemistry of the oceans is changing—and that just these two fundamental changes in the environment that we now take-for-granted are going to increase poverty, civil strife, and perhaps even the prospects of a fascist government that will go to any length to preserve the right of corporations to continue to exploit the environment and to further enclose the diversity of the world's cultural commons. There are promising proposals for educational reforms that are being discussed in different countries, but unfortunately most faculty are too busy with their individually oriented research and still too

captive of the misconceptions acquired in their own graduate studies, to consider whether the content of their courses and research is part of the problem or part of the solution.

Chapter 5 How Computers Contribute to the Enclosure of the Cultural Commons

There are two reasons why any discussion of how computers contribute to the enclosure of the cultural commons is immensely complicated. First, computers are now a ubiquitous part of everyday life. Understanding how they both empower and enclose the cultural commons is made more complicated by the fact that they are now responsible for a new kind of commons: that, is the cybercommons. Second, the cultural and environmental commons are equally diverse and complex, especially when we take into account the different cultural approaches to what constitutes the intergenerational alternatives to consumerism. In order to reduce the complexity of issues, this discussion will focus on the educational uses of computers, as sources of entertainment, and as a technology that reinforces the pattern of thinking that is the basis of the industrial/consumer dependent culture that is contributing to global warming and to other forms of environmental degradation.

My analysis will be based on examples taken from various Western contexts, such as public school and university classrooms, as well as the cultural mediating characteristics of computer technology—including software programs. As criticisms are often framed in simplistic dichotomous categories, a special effort has been made to identify examples of how they enable us to understand new phenomenon and to develop solutions to problems that were impossible before the introduction of computers. These range from scheduling airline traffic, analyzing changes in natural systems, providing more effective medical procedures, enabling people to access and exchange information on a global scale, and to keep in touch with friends and families spread over vast distances. To list all the benefits would take too many pages, and would still not be inclusive enough. But there is a downside to computers, such as enabling corporations to outsource work to low-wage regions of the world, and to keeping their profits offshore-- thus enabling them to avoid taxes. Other negatives include how computers have enabled scientists to genetically alter seeds that, in turn, threaten genetic diversity, how they now are the basis of a national surveillance system that is one of the hallmarks of a police state, and how they contribute to the enclosure of the diversity of the world's cultural commons that are essential to slowing the rate of global warming. The list of negative attributes is also too numerous to be fully identified here.

The various uses of computers tend to magnify the characteristics and agenda of the individuals and institutions using them. Individuals and institutions concerned with addressing environmental issues are able to network with others who have similar interests; just as hate groups, religious extremists, and corporations collaborate with groups that support their respective agendas. Computers enable corporations to achieve a level of efficiency and a scale of outsourcing that greatly enhances profit margins, just as groups concerned with social justice and environmental issues are able to create networks of support that increase their political influence. Students are able to access information and ways of thinking that go beyond what is available in textbooks, while other students who want a good grade without doing the work are able to download already prepared papers.

In order to identify the many ways in which the use of computers contribute to the enclosure of the cultural and environmental commons it is first necessary to summarize the chief characteristics of the commons. This summary will also be useful for clarifying the similarities and differences between what is being referred to as the “cybercommons” and the diversity of the world’s cultural and environmental commons. For readers who may want more than a survey I suggest that they read my previous three books: Revitalizing the Commons: Cultural and Educational Sites of Resistance and Affirmation (2006); chapter 5 of the online book, Renewing the Commons: University Reform in an Era of Degraded Democracy and Environmental Crises (2006); and the online book, Transforming Environmental Education: Making the Cultural and Environmental Commons the Focus of Educational Reform (2006). Other highly useful books include The Great Transformation (1944, 1957) by Karl Polyani, and the Ecologist’s Whose Common Future: Reclaiming the Commons (1993). However, these latter two books, as well as the vast number of articles now available from the Digital Library of the Commons, do not address educational reforms.

The key characteristics of the local cultural and environmental commons, which are also found in the commons of other regions of the world, include the following: (1) the intergenerational knowledge, skills, relationships, and activities that are carried on largely outside of the Western model of a money economy; (2) examples of the commons, whether it is centered on food, creative arts, health care, entertainment,

ceremonies and narratives, mentoring, civil liberties, etc., are largely dependent upon face-to-face relationships and the spoken word; (3) the languaging processes that sustain the different cultural approaches to moral reciprocity and patterns of mutual support are generally framed by the culture's mythopoetic narratives that explain the origin and purpose of life—and well as moral relationships; (4) intergenerational learning may occur through mentoring relationships, as well as through embodied learning that is influenced by observing the behavior, approaches to problem solving, and patterns of reciprocity exhibited by significant others; (5) the languaging processes, which vary from culture to culture, serve as a form of storage of the accumulated experiences of how to live within the limits and possibilities of the bioregion. These languaging processes include ceremonies, narratives, built environments, and uses of technologies that reflect the understanding of earlier generations. As Jared Diamond documents in his book, *Collapse: How Societies Choose to Fail or Succeed* (2005), not all cultures are able to adapt their intergenerational knowledge, skills, and technologies in order to live within the limits of what the local bioregion can sustain. In many cases, their guiding mythopoetic narratives and high status forms of knowledge misrepresented the importance of the ecology of human/Nature interdependencies which no culture can ignore.

By now, most readers are undoubtedly wondering whether the intergenerational knowledge—including narratives, skills, scientific discoveries, and technologies that are the basis of the industrial/consumer-dependent culture-- should also be considered as part of the cultural commons. These forms of intergenerational knowledge carry forward a different set of cultural assumptions, and while they may involve face-to-face communication between teachers/professors and students, they are largely based on printed texts and other abstract systems of representation. What may be difficult for most scientists and nearly all technologists to understand is that their guiding cultural assumptions have been based on the mythopoetic narratives found in the *Book of Genesis*, as well as the theories of Western philosophers who established the tradition of thinking that ideas, especially about the nature of thinking, do not have to take account of different cultural knowledge systems and local contexts. The institutions most responsible for reinforcing these values and patterns of thinking are the public schools

and universities—and now computer technologies that carry forward the de-contextualized knowledge that previously were the hallmark of print technology. These institutions, as well as the many forms of education promoted in corporations and in government, are part of the monetized culture that expands by enclosing more of the cultural and environmental commons. Indeed, this knowledge is bought and sold like other commodities and, within the context of schools and universities its value is increasingly being judged in terms of whether it increases the students' earning power.

As I pointed out in The Culture of Denial (1997), schools and universities perpetuate the distinction between high and low status knowledge through the practice of excluding from the curriculum the diversity of face-to-face intergenerational knowledge, skills, and activities carried on in the world's local communities that are only marginally dependent upon the money economy of the industrial/consumer culture. The marginalization of the face-to-face intergenerational knowledge can be seen in Al Gore's recent film, An Inconvenient Truth. After providing an excellent overview of the rate and consequences of global warming, the audience is presented with examples of how the adoption of more energy efficient and carbon reducing technologies will help to slow the rate of global warming. But the main alternative to the consumer dependent lifestyle-- that is, the cultural commons that reduces the need for consumerism—is entirely ignored. In effect, the message of the film is that people can continue to consume at the current rate as long as they adopt more carbon reducing and energy efficient technologies—and make purchases that last longer, and put their groceries in a reusable tote bag. Gore and the women and men who produced the film, and perhaps even the scientists involved in the project, reproduced in the film the high status knowledge promoted in our educational institutions—including the silences about the non-monetized practices and relationships that have a smaller ecological impact and are still part of the life of most communities. Their list for reducing consumerism which is one of the major causes of global warming, reflects how the high-status knowledge that was the basis of their university education prevented them from recognizing the need to change the cultural assumptions that underlie the industrial mode of production and consumption—and that continue to marginalize an awareness how the cultural commons are being enclosed.

High-status knowledge is largely print based (that, is decontextualized) and is based on culturally specific assumptions that represent the individual as achieving greater autonomy through education, change as the expression of a linear form of progress, the culture-free nature of the rational process, mechanism as a model for thinking about everything from the human brain to engineering new gene lines, the more “evolved” nature of the Western cultures, and the need to universalize the Western model of economic development. High-status knowledge is also characterized by a deeply held and largely unconscious yet profoundly problematic ethnocentrism discussed in the earlier chapter on how Western philosophies have contributed to the marginalization of the cultural commons. The high-status knowledge promoted in our educational institutions is also based on a conduit view of language that sustains the myth of a sender/received model of communication. This assumption contributes to the lack of awareness that words have a history, and that their meaning is framed by the largely taken-for-granted root metaphors of the culture. It also contributes to misunderstanding how language carries forward the moral templates of the culture, which it does by how the attributes of the different participants, including human/nature relationships, are represented. For example, the words “weed”, “wild”, “woman”, “man”, “primitive” were in the past assumed to possess specific attributes. The nature of the attributes, such as being worthless, a danger, weak and emotional, strong and self-reliant, backward, and so forth, are examples of how the language of a culture carries forward, given the nature of the Other’s culturally defined attributes, what is regarded as moral behavior.

Both the diversity of the cultural and environmental commons, as well as the high-status knowledge being promoted by our educational institutions, need to be taken into account when assessing what is constructive and destructive about the cybercommons. In writing about the connections between civic renewal and the commons of cyberspace, Peter Levine observed that

People used the Internet not only to view others’ material but also to build sites and disseminate free text and pictures, creating a gigantic commonwealth of public information. Usually, there is a reason not to contribute goods to a common pool: others may use them up without donating anything of equal value. But the problem is reduced if the goods take a digital form, because

they can be used many times over without harm. Of course, not all of these goods were equally beneficial. The free material that was available online included not just genuine public goods but pirated pornography, false rumors, and racist screeds as well. But at least people had a rare opportunity to generate free and nondegradable common resources at a low cost. Open architecture, free content, and norms of sharing together made a true commons in cyberspace (National Civic Review, 2001, p. 207).

Levine's summary identifies the mix of human values and agendas found in most face-to-face commons. What is important about the cybercommons is the open access that allows for the exchange of ideas and other materials that can be used over again. He also identifies another characteristic of the cybercommons that is shared with face-to-face cultural commons. That is, both types of commons are under similar threats of being monetized and thus enclosed to people who lack the necessary economic resources. However, what Levine fails to recognize is that, unlike the cultural commons, the cybercommons requires continual participation in the hi-tech part of the industrial/consumer culture. Both the initial access to the cybercommons, as well as the continual necessity to upgrade the technology requires a large investment. In the face-to-face commons there is no initial cost connected with participating--though some forms of commons activities may require the purchase of materials. These are important differences which bring into question whether identifying cyberspace as a commons is basically misleading. An additional difference that cannot be overlooked is that since the passage of the Digital Millennium Act in 1998 everything that is digitally encoded and communicated is automatically copyrighted. In effect, everything that is digitized is privately owned—which is the most basic form of enclosure. The reluctance of most owners of digital material to demand payment is what creates the illusion that cyberspace is a commons.

If we keep these basic differences in mind, and go along with the illusion of cyberspace as being a genuine commons, we can see other similarities with such modern forms of the commons as municipal transportation systems, water facilities, and state and federal parks. Just as municipal water systems are being taken over by corporations, and public parks are under threat of being sold to private interests, the open use of the

cybercommons is now being threatened by the corporations that produce the software and control the networking systems. The increasing availability of cable television lines and broadcast spectrum allows corporate owned search engines to steer users to products advertised on the websites. With this increase in digital traffic the cable and phone companies see possibilities of vastly increased profits, and are now pressing the federal government to allow them to introduce variable user rates. In effect, cyberspace as some of the characteristics of the commons now being transformed in ways where every level and form of use will have to be purchased.

The educational, entertainment, and email uses of computers still involve participating in the cybercommons that are still not entirely enclosed by corporate interests. However, when we consider the shared characteristics of these different uses, it is possible to recognize more easily how computers, in being limited to what can be digitized, contribute to the enclosure of the world's diversity of face-to-face cultural commons. As pointed out earlier, the face-to-face commons is dependent upon intergenerational knowledge that is passed along and often negotiated primarily through the spoken word—which is supplemented by the culture's patterns of metacommunication that may have a greater impact on relationships than the spoken word. Face-to-face communication is contextual, relies extensively upon tacit understandings—with silence often communicating important messages. Another inescapable characteristic of face-to-face commons is that meanings and agreements are often the outcome of a very complex and ritually dictated process of negotiation that adheres to the taken-for-granted norms of the culture. Face-to-face patterns of communication are both identity forming and often a matter of identity preservation—as when issues have to be settled in a way that preserves the power and self identity of one or both of the participants.

Computer mediated learning, as well as other forms of computer mediated communication, lack the above aspects of face-to-face communication. The reason for computers lacking these human characteristics, which are essential to the intergenerational renewal of the cultural commons, is that they cannot be digitized. Tacit understandings, personal memories, the combination of contexts and taken-for-granted cultural norms cannot be turned into a text or a documentary without being

fundamentally transformed into something that is abstract and reduced to what is viewed from a distance. What is lost can be seen by comparing the difference between participating in a ceremony and viewing a documentary record of it—or reading about it in text form.

There is also a difference introduced by the individuals who are observers, as well as those who transform the documentary material into digital form. They bring to this process of transforming the lived experience into an abstract text or visual product their own cultural assumptions which, in turn, influence what will be seen, as well as the interpretation that will be given. In addition, the taken-for-granted nature of much of human experience is also an important consideration in determining what is being misrepresented. As can be seen by looking at educational software used at different levels of formal education, the cultural assumptions of the people who write the program, regardless of whether it is intended to develop decision making skills in certain subject areas or is a game involving interactions with other players, are always written into the program. To put this another way, someone's mental processes, as well as what she/he is unaware of, are always encoded in what is encountered when involved in different forms of computer mediated learning.

These observations should not be interpreted as denying that computer mediated communication lacks many of the elements of human interaction. Arguments, negotiations of meanings and understanding, commands, misrepresentations of one's true feeling and intentions—even one's true identity (which is harder to do in face-to-face communication) are all part of electronically mediated communication. Even many of the culture's distinctive patterns that regulate text-based communication come into play. But the importance of tacit understandings, context and place-based knowledge, personal memory, and the non-verbal patterns of communicating about the ongoing relationships are missing.

The many ways in which the cybercommons fosters the experience of participating in a community of shared interests, mutual support, and even moral reciprocity is definitely a social good. To learn from anonymous Others about the nature of slow food, green mapping of cities, as well as what scientists are reporting on changes in ecosystems, may leave the impression that the cybercommons represent a vast

improvement over the human interactions in a shopping mall and in a traffic situation where tempers rise just short of violent behavior. But this would be a misinterpretation, as these latter examples represent how people focused on money, symbols of social status, and getting ahead seldom consider how their values, ways of thinking, and behavior undermine the patterns of reciprocity and mutual support that are the hallmarks of a vital cultural commons. Like the Janus god of Roman times, the cybercommons can also facilitate the promotion of hate, prejudice, pornography, money scams, and deliberate distortions of facts and events.

Another set of relationships needs to be considered. The cybercommons, unlike face-to-face communication and even cell phone communication, can be done at the time of the individual's choosing. The individual's own set of priorities, rather than the expectations of others, will largely determine how much time is devoted to using the computer. There is also a downside to this convenience; and it has to do with a point that Robert Putnam makes about the nature of social relationships that strengthen local democracy. As he points out in Making Democracy Work (1993), friends and neighbors passing each other on the street, taking time to exchange information about family events and other activities, and interacting with people from different social backgrounds and ethnic traditions, all contribute to a broader understanding of the issues and social impact that various political decisions will have. Thus, it is not the isolated individual who is spending hours playing games with participants from other parts of the world, or the individual who sits for hours engaged in a chat room or searching for information, that strengthens local democracy—which is a key feature of the cultural commons. Rather, it is the face-to-face relationships in work settings, in mentoring others, in helping a neighbor repair a roof, in helping the poor and lonely to have access to food and decent housing, in sharing a skill, and so forth, that provide the background knowledge essential to making the democratic process work for the broader well-being of the community.

The industrial, consumer-oriented culture needs the isolated individual who must rely upon the money economy to purchase many of the needs of daily life that are freely available when participating in the cultural commons—and may only require minor dependence upon what the industrial culture can provide. The cybercommons can be used by people who are fully conscious of the benefits of the cultural commons, but in

the final analysis the judgment has to be that the cybercommons works to the detriment of the cultural commons. The time spent in cyberspace is time not spent participating in the activities and mutually supportive relationships that sustain the face-to-face cultural commons. And individuals are spending an increasing amount of their time in the world of cyberspace that is so profoundly lacking in the sights, smells, sounds, and the interactive complexities of nature. I suspect that if a study were conducted as to whether individuals who spend a great deal of time online possess less awareness of environmental issues a direct correlation would be found.

The issues discussed above raise an important question: namely, given the cultural mediating characteristics of computers why is so little attention given in public schools and universities to helping students understand the cultural transforming nature of computer mediated thinking and communicating? Reliance upon technologies has been a major characteristic of the dominant culture in the West, yet its mixed record of achievements and failures is given so little attention—except to develop further the sciences that will lead to new technologies. We are just beginning to study the impact of various technologies on natural systems. However this, along with recent books examining the history of different technologies, have not filtered down to public school and university classrooms. The most common response of university graduates is to claim that technologies, including computers, are both the engine of progress and a culturally neutral tool. Given the challenges that global warming and the changes in the chemistry of the oceans now confront us with, it is even more imperative that educational reformers give high priority to helping students understand how technologies generally, but computers specifically, undermine the diversity of cultural traditions that represent alternatives to the consumer dependent lifestyle.

The following is a more focused discussion of the different ways in which computers affect the viability of the cultural commons. It is hoped that this overview will help teachers and professors recognize how to engage students in discussions that lead to a more complex understanding of the appropriate and inappropriate uses of computers—and to an understanding that computers and other technologies are not culturally neutral tools. The focus here will be on how computers contribute to the enclosure of the cultural and environmental commons.

How the Idea that Individuals Construct Their Own Knowledge Contributes to Enclosing the Cultural and Environmental Commons. The two most ubiquitous forms of enclosure include the silences that individuals unconsciously accept as part of their taken-for-granted daily experience. This results in the inability to recognize when different aspects of the cultural commons-- such as civil liberties, the knowledge of how to farm without relying upon pesticides and other chemicals, the grass lands and marshes that disappear under the pressure of developers, mentors who are dying off without having passed their knowledge and skills on to the younger generation, etc.—are being enclosed. This form of enclosure results from how the media and most public school and university classes reinforce the knowledge and values supporting the expansion of the industrial, consumer dependent culture. What a few students learn about the various natural systems that are being degraded is overwhelmed by the larger number of classes that perpetuate the silences about the community centered alternatives to a consumer dependent lifestyle.

The other form of enclosure promoted mostly in public schools can be traced to various theories that promote the idea that students should be encouraged to construct their own knowledge—though, as mentioned earlier, a more ideologically based emphasis on students doing their own thinking is reinforced in universities. Proponents of computer-based learning often claim that computers make it possible for constructivist learning to occur in the classroom, which then leads to teachers playing the role of being a facilitator who does not impose their prejudices and limited knowledge on students. The so-called virtue of students constructing their own knowledge is now being further supported by another largely unquestioned assumption: namely, that the manner in which the expanding digital culture allows people to make their ideas available to others as part of the cybercommons fosters a more democratic society—and the flat earth that Thomas Friedman of The New York times celebrates as the latest expression of technological progress.

As I have written several books that are critical of various constructivist learning theorists, such as John Dewey, Paulo Freire, Jean Piaget, and less known theorists who argue for the more intelligent yet basically wrong idea of social constructivism, I shall summarize here the most salient criticisms. For those wanting a more in-depth critique, I

suggest they read The False Promises of Constructivist Theories of Learning: A Global and Ecological Critique (2005); and the online book, Transforming Environmental Education: Making the Cultural and Environmental Commons the Focus of Educational Reform (2006). The chief misconception underlying the various constructivist theories of learning that proponents of computer-based learning rely upon is that, contrary to popular thinking, the individual is not the Cartesian individual who is free of the influence of culture's taken-for-granted patterns of thinking, who stands apart from the external world as an objective observer, and who makes autonomous decisions about what constitutes knowledge, and the values that are to be lived by, and what is unworthy of attention.

What the Dewey, Freire, Piaget, and the ideologues that promote the high-status knowledge in university classrooms overlook is that the supposedly autonomous individual's pattern of thinking, values, and behaviors are influenced from the first moments after birth by the intergenerational languaging patterns that sustain the culture's symbolic systems. These initial encounters are learned as part of the taken-for-granted stock of knowledge that the infant, and at later stages of development, is unable to name except in the language largely made available by others. Sounds, tastes, what will be seen and not seen, the non-verbal patterns of communication and moral values constituted earlier in the culture's history, all become, in varying degrees, part of the individual's natural attitude toward the everyday world. This legacy of taken-for-granted culture may include the narratives that exclude and lead to the exploitation of others; it may also include the values of moral reciprocity, as well as an understanding of the patterns of interdependence with the non-human world. This legacy may also include the forms of knowledge that are valued by the culture—including an awareness of the importance of critical inquiry. The role of critical inquiry in some cultures is to assess which traditions are essential to retaining a degree of self-sufficiency and thus in need of being conserved. The goal of various models of critical thinking in the West is to overturn all traditions that limit the progress of supposedly autonomous individuals who are engaged in constructing their own knowledge. What the proponents of critical inquiry overlook is that the constant quest for new technologies and markets also relies upon critical inquiry, and that this quest also impacts the non-consumer oriented traditions of the community by turning them into new market opportunities. What is largely missing in the thinking

of constructivist theorists, as well as in the thinking of proponents of computer-based learning, is the need to have a more balanced understanding of the role of critical inquiry in contributing to a more ecologically sustainable culture.

The assumptions shared by various interpretations of how students construct their own knowledge, including the way computers supposedly further empower students to achieve even more autonomy as thinkers, represent what can be called an “ecology of cultural misconceptions” that will contribute to yet another example of cultural collapse as we exceed the sustaining capacity of the natural systems. Common sense should lead to the awareness that socializing students, and adults who are increasingly at home in the cybercommons, to the idea that they are constructing their own knowledge of reality, and that is as valid as the realities constructed by others, creates a deep prejudice against learning the many ways they have been influenced by their cultural traditions. This prejudice is the source of a double bind whereby they continue to reenact the taken-for-granted patterns of thinking of their culture, including the culture’s silences, while at the same time maintaining the illusion that they are autonomous individuals—and thus free of the need to consider which taken-for-granted traditions need to be intergenerationally renewed and which need to be overturned.

An example of how the “I am in charge of my own destiny” generation (or what can be called the iPod-cell phone- computer gaming generation) continues to reinforce the consumer lifestyle while ignoring the traditions of the cultural commons that most intelligent people would want to conserve is the enclosure of different traditions that have long been associated with our civil liberties. What is being lost as this generation is electronically connected includes the right to privacy, habeas corpus, and the presumption of innocence until proven guilty. The federal government now monitors most of the individual’s activities, and can even have her/him declared an “enemy combatant” and turned over to the CIA for various forms of interrogation that exceed what the Geneva Convention allows. The irony is that many of the current and previous generations who have been educated in our public schools and universities continue to be not just indifferent, but to actively support this loss of our civil rights. This many sound like an over-generalization, but we need to remind ourselves that the majority of Congress that represents (indeed, reflects) the will of the majority of Americans passed

the Military Commissions Act as well as Public Law 109-364; both of which gives the President sweeping powers, including taking federal control of the National Guard to put down domestic unrest, to arrest citizens as “potential terrorists” and “enemy combatants,” and to hold them in detention centers now being built by a subsidiary of Halliburton. Not only does the iPod-cell phone-gaming generation ignore the loss of traditions essential to a cultural commons governed by the rule of law and the presumption of innocence, but also the loss of the environmental commons as the industrial consumer dependent culture demands more resources.

It is impossible to digitize the inner world of the individual—emotions, thoughts, and insights, embodied sensations when participating in various face-to-face activities ranging from participating in a ceremony, engaged in being mentored and in mentoring others, and walking along a trail in the woods—without reducing them to an abstract text or documentary that is supposedly free of the individual’s perspective and powers of interpretation. The taken-for-granted world of the individual, which the educational process should help students to recognize and assess in terms of whether they contribute to a sustainable future, is beyond the technological capacity of computers. How the past influences the present, as well as how the changes in distant ecosystems make us less secure than we can understand in terms of our individualized perspective, are critically important to our collective future. Unfortunately, computer mediated learning, along with the constructivist theories of learning now being used to promote greater reliance upon the use of computers in the classroom, contribute to the silences and sense of indifference about these aspects of human experience. Constructivist theories of learning, which are now an orthodoxy in many parts of the world where computers are considered as essential to preparing students for the global economy, perpetuate the illusion that teachers no longer have responsibility for helping students to recognize the importance of what they don’t know.

How the Conduit View of Language Contributes to the Enclosure of the Commons. The complex set of relationships that can be referred to as the ecology of language cannot be accurately represented by computers. The reason for this limitation is the sender/receiver model of communication required by computers. The sender/receiver model of communication comes into play in educational settings where facts and information are

represented as objective. However, in many other face-to-face relationships this model of communication is inadequate. Words that are assumed to convey a certain meaning or conceptual image are often challenged, which may lead to a search for a better analog—and even to adopting a different root metaphor in order to reframe how something should be understood. Face-to-face communication may also involve one of the participants pointing out that words have a history, with the meaning associated with a particular word often challenged as no longer appropriate in terms of today's understanding. The ongoing negotiation of meanings, which may move to the level of negotiating (or dictating) which root metaphor provides the most appropriate explanatory framework, cannot be reproduced through computer mediated communication. Words that appear on the screen appear as factual representations of a fixed reality. That words have a history and may have taken on different meanings over time as the underlying root metaphors changed in response to other developments in the culture is simply lost. An example of this is the way the “individual” was understood as a subject in feudal times, as a citizen during the time leading up to the American and French Revolutions, and as a source of creativity during the German Enlightenment—and today as constructing her/his own knowledge. Essential to the ecology of languaging that occurs in face-to-face communication, which is also missing from computer mediated communication, are the non-verbal patterns of communication that are powerful sources of framing not only how words are to be interpreted but also how interpersonal relationships are to be understood. The differences between the conduit view of language and the participatory nature of the ecology of languaging in face-to-face communication is largely lost on the naïve student whose other formal educational experiences have not led to a in-depth discussion of the history and political/power implications of words.

The experts who write the software programs tend to reproduce what they learned from their professors, which is that language is a conduit through which ideas and information are passed. Aristotle's misunderstanding of the nature of metaphorical thinking—a misunderstanding that was further reinforced by John Locke's argument that we put ideas into words that then convey the ideas to others (the conduit view of language), still contributes to the silence about the layered nature of metaphorical thinking—and how metaphorical thinking is an inescapable aspect of thought and

communication. The writings of George Lakoff and Mark Johnson have helped to dispel the misunderstanding that represents language as a conduit, rather than as a metaphorically layered process of framing how words are to be understood. But even they have not fully understood how the history of metaphorical thinking needs to be taken into account—especially how the root metaphors constituted in the distant past continue to influence how we think today. This lack of historical perspective led Lakoff to identify the root metaphors that underlie classical liberal thinking with today’s conservatism, and Mark Johnson to label environmentalists working to conserve habitats and species as “progressives”—which is the metaphor that more accurately represents the efforts of technologists and capitalists concerned with inventing new products and achieving greater profits. A fuller discussion of their conceptual errors is available in the essay on linguistic complicity that is part of this collection of essays.

By ignoring how the metaphorical nature of language carries forward over many generations ways of understanding that were the outcome of the taken-for-granted root metaphors and the prevailing analogs of an earlier time in the culture’s history, computer mediated thinking contributes to marginalizing an important part of the cultural commons. The need to continually renew the linguistic storehouse of knowledge and values that are part of the cultural commons is especially important today, as many of the root metaphors are responsible for the cultural excesses that have contributed to global warming and the degradation of other natural systems. That root metaphors that had their origins in the consciousness forming mythopoetic narratives of the distant past can be seen in how patriarchy and anthropocentrism are now being contested and revised. Other root metaphors that are part of the intergenerational commons, and in need of being understood as ecologically destructive, include mechanism, progress, individualism, and, how evolution is now being used to explain which cultural “memes” are better adapted. A strong case can be made that computer mediated learning, rather than helping students understand the cultural and historical origins of these root metaphors and why they are problematic in this era of ecological crises, actually reinforces the students’ acceptance of them. Educational software is nearly universal in reinforcing the cultural assumptions (which can be traced back to root metaphors constituted in the distant past) about the autonomous nature of individual decision making, the unrelenting quest for innovations

and change as leading to progress, and a mechanistic way of thinking about organic processes.

The question that seldom comes up in discussions about the educational advantages of relying upon computers is whether the skills learned in navigating through the seemingly endless sites in the cybercommons can be transferred into those areas of daily life where the exercise of craft knowledge and manual skill enables individuals to make something for themselves, rather than being dependent upon hiring an expert or purchasing what has been produced on an assembly line. As Matthew Crawford points out in an article titled “Shop Class as Soulcraft (The New Atlantis, No. 13, Summer, 2006, pp. 7-24) craft knowledge and manual skill enable people to produce material objects that are useful and have aesthetic qualities that reflect individual judgment. They are also essential to making repairs that have social usefulness recognized and valued by others, that are a source of pride for doing something well, and that combines what has been increasingly severed in the computer driven industrial system of production—that is, the interplay between the exercise of intelligence and manual skill in wiring a building, repairing an engine, in choosing the right wood and crafting it into a cabinet or musical instrument. As Crawford points out, the combination of craft knowledge, manual skill, and the drive to doing something well, is a source of personal pride--which is an essential part of human experience seldom realized in the kind of work connected with digital world of computer technologies. The skills developed in cyberspace add little to what is required of a master craftsman. Indeed, a strong case can be made that reinforcing as high status a life spent in the world of abstractions (the cybercommons) undermines the importance of an integrated life of manual skills and creative intelligence by relegating them to low-status. This low status leads to greater efforts to bypass craft knowledge and performance with automated systems of production that further weaken local economies and the self-sufficiency of local communities.

The Role of Mediator Between the Cultural/Environmental Commons and the Industrial/Consumer-Dependent Culture. It would not be inaccurate to claim that all uses of computers involve some form of learning. What is being learned, however, ranges from learning about changes in natural systems that can only be modeled by a powerful computer, participating in an online course that enables students to interact more freely

than in a traditional classroom, acquiring the technical information for assembling a bomb and coordinating its use in a terrorist attack, to accessing information on government policies that otherwise would remain hidden from public view. Many pages would be required to list everything that is being learned from using computers. Not all forms of learning contribute to the well-being of the individual, the community, and the environment. And much of what is being learned, as pointed out in the earlier discussion of how language carries forward the misconceptions of past generations, increases the ability of corporations and other anti-social justice groups to further exploit the cultural and environmental commons.

The question that now needs to be asked is “What should be the responsibilities of school teachers and university professors in this era of increased reliance on online learning?” Currently, there is widespread acceptance of the idea that public school teachers should be facilitators of student initiated learning. Teachers are not to impose their ideas upon the students, but rather limit their influence to that of providing a complex set of learning possibilities. However, as many students, even the very young, have achieved greater competency in the use of the computer than their teachers, the teachers’ role as facilitators is often reduced to that of making various educational software available—and leaving the students exposed to the values and cultural assumptions that the designers of the software take for granted.

In the upper grades as well as in university classes, the role of the teacher and professor continues much as before computers appeared on the scene. Assignments are expanded by making the computer a research tool that provides access to a wider range of information—including already written papers that students can download and hand in as evidence of their own diligent efforts. Online courses change the dynamics of the teacher/professor relationship with students in a fundamental way. Online relationships have the advantage of marginalizing skin color, as well as the clothes and body language that communicate social classes and ethnic differences that sometimes are the basis of prejudicial judgments on the part of the teacher and professor. Computers also tend to make the relationship between students and teacher/professor less hierarchical, as well as freeing students to exchange ideas with each other—rather than with an authority figure standing in the front of the room. Ideas and questions can be exchanged without

becoming part of the power relations that are communicated through the body language that is often misinterpreted and thus damaging to achieving mutual understanding of what is being discussed. In addition there are the economic advantages for both the students and the university. Students can take courses while living a great distance from the university and even when their work schedules do not match the rigid scheduling of courses on a university campus. Universities gain economically by being able to offer courses to large numbers of students scattered around the world. Thus, they are able to extend the “market” for online courses and degrees.

What may not occur to the professors teaching these online courses, or to the administrators ever in search of new markets from which to draw students, is that the online courses represent a form of cultural colonization to the idea that education automatically translates into a higher material standard of living. The colonization takes two forms: that of educating students to taken-for-granted Western assumptions—including the assumptions that Western technologies and ways of thinking are the most progressive and enlightened in the world. The other form of colonization that online education promotes is the way it represents both directly and indirectly the knowledge, practices, and activities of the local cultural commons as the expression of backwardness—even though the cultural commons is, in many instances, a storehouse of knowledge about how to live the more self-sufficient/non-consumer lifestyle that global warming will eventually force all cultures to adopt.

I have argued in The False Promises of Constructivist Theories of Learning: A Global and Ecological Critique (2005), as well as in the online book, Transforming Environmental Education: Making the Cultural and Environmental Commons the Focus of Educational Reform (2006) that given the adverse environmental impact of our industrial consumer-dependent lifestyle it is now necessary for school teachers and university professors to recognize how the high-status forms of knowledge they promote contributes to the ecological crises. In these two books, as well as in the other essays in this collection, I have argued that most academic disciplines carry forward the prejudices and silences that further undermine what remains of the cultural and environmental commons. If educators at all levels of institutionalized education are to contribute to slowing the rate of global warming and reducing the amount of carbon dioxide that is

changing the chemistry of the world's oceans they will need to recognize that the world is now divided in two ways: the industrial consumer-oriented culture that is now being globalized, and the diverse cultural and environmental commons that go back to the beginning of human history. The commons of cultures that have been heavily colonized by Western ways of thinking and the consumer lifestyle are being enclosed faster than the cultures still under the influence of religions that have not made economic progress the highest expression of human success and a sign of God's chosen people. Unfortunately, many of their environmental commons have been degraded by population pressures, changes in weather patterns, destruction resulting from local and global wars, and the exploitation of their resources by international corporations. But this is another story that is not the primary focus here.

The issue that requires our attention is why these two cultural orientations –the industrial, consumer-oriented culture, and the diversity of the world's cultural and environmental commons—should lead us to rethink the role of the school teacher and the university professor. The fundamental differences between these two cultural orientations suggest the nature of the changes that need to be made in how we understand their responsibilities in this era of global warming. The suggestion that social justice liberal school teachers and university professors should reach a consensus about the primary challenge we now face is not likely to lead to widespread agreement. Indeed, getting agreement in our individualistic culture, where it is assumed that social progress is advanced when each person pursues her/his own interests, is like herding a group of cats. Even though my argument may be ignored, I will nevertheless present the reasons why teachers and professors should stop promoting an uncritical acceptance of the high-status knowledge that furthers the enclosure of the cultural and environmental commons, as well as the reasons why they should adopt the role of mediators between these two cultural orientations.

As mediators, the teachers' role should change from that of reinforcing the taken-for-granted cultural assumptions that underlie the industrial culture to helping students identify the **genuine** achievements of the last two hundred or so years of Western science and technology, as well as how the misconceptions of the past have prevented a more critical assessment of scientific and technological discoveries. That is, the achievements

must be assessed in terms of whether they contribute to a more ecologically sustainable future, and to more socially just international relationships. In short, their mediating role requires avoiding socializing students to take-for-granted the idea that the industrialized and scientifically based West has achieved a higher level of development than the non-industrialized and non Western scientific based cultures. In so many ways, the decline in the ability of natural systems to support the current level of human demand suggests that the hubris and the cultural assumptions formed in the distant past, and that still serve as the basis of the thinking of experts, are both fundamentally flawed.

Mediating between the two cultural orientations also requires that the cultural and environmental commons not be represented as a lost paradise, and the industrial consumer culture as a colossal mistake. If a colossal mistake has been made it has taken the form of ignoring the nature and ecological importance of the local cultural commons as well as the diversity of the world's commons. Not only have the cultural commons been ignored, but the promotion of high status knowledge has prejudiced students against the traditions and intergenerational knowledge that exists largely outside of the money economy. This mistake cannot be rectified by policies that further expand the economy and the level of consumerism, even if these policies also promote the wider use of energy efficient technologies.

Mediating between these two cultural orientations will require a fundamental shift away from those aspects of the Cartesian mind-set that are so widespread in our educational systems. Helping students become aware of the differences in relationships, values, and patterns of mutual support that separate the two cultural orientations will require replacing the assumption about the authority of their subjective judgments as well as their equally subjective perspective on an external world with a more focused and in-depth understanding of the complexity of the cultural patterns that are consciously and unconsciously re-enacted in everyday life. Introducing students to an ecological way of thinking will help them recognize that the dominant characteristic of everyday life involves interdependent relationships—with others, the environment, and the legacy of the past of which they may not even be aware. The Cartesian legacy not only misrepresents the autonomy of the individual's perspective on an external world, but also reinforces a key element of the industrial consumer-dependent mind-set, which is to

ignore the legacy that everyday life is largely based upon. Viewing the past as irrelevant helps to ensure that what is being enclosed by market forces will go unnoticed—even as the loss, such as in the areas of civil liberties and mutual support systems, increases peoples' vulnerability to forces over which they have less and less control.

Mediating is different from indoctrinating or privileging one point of view over others. Rather, it requires recognizing that the old criteria for thinking about progress no longer holds—which was largely a matter of equating new ideas and technologies with progress. Today, each aspect of the cultural and environmental commons, as well as the many technologies and expert systems, must now be assessed anew as to whether they contribute to the long-term sustainability of the culture, as well as a culture that has achieved a greater level of social justice. As I point out in Chapter 4 of the online book, Transforming Environmental Education, mediating between the two cultures may take the form in the elementary grades of helping students to articulate—that is, to name and to identify relationships and interdependencies that often go unnoticed. This may include discussing the differences they experience in face-to-face conversations and what they experience when communicating through the printed word—and through a computer. Later in the students' exploration of the two cultural orientations they experience on a daily basis, the process of mediating may involve an examination of the differences between different forms of oral communication (face-to-face, narratives, expressive arts, etc. and different forms of abstract communication (mathematical and other forms of modeling, printed word, abstract art, learning about the past and other areas of the world that can never be evaluated in terms of direct experiences, ideologies derived from earlier texts, and so forth).

The range of activities, skills, relationships, and forms of knowledge that separate the two cultural orientations should be the focus of the curriculum at all levels of formal education—and the teacher's and professor's role as mediator should essentially be the same. That is, helping students learn how different forms of enclosure undermine local democracy and contribute to greater dependence upon a money economy that is becoming increasingly unreliable for many people. They should also help students recognize and understand how different forms of enclosure may represent a genuine contribution to the community and to achieving a more sustainable form of existence.

The tradition of segregation in the South and the racial prejudices that dominated the workplace in most regions of the country was part of the cultural commons that needed to be enclosed—that is, it required overturning the use of racist language, narratives that upheld the virtues of slavery, and the laws that supported a racist society.

Mediating between cultures also requires helping students acquire an awareness of, as well as the language for articulating the empowering and mutually supportive activities that are part of the local cultural commons. Learning the traditions of knowledge and interdependencies being lost when a corporation such as Monsanto introduces a genetically altered cotton seed that resists the pesticide Round Up, or when young people have been too preoccupied in cyberspace to learn how to prepare a meal using traditional family recipes that they have to rely upon industrially prepared food, could also be the focus of learning about the differences between the two cultures. Other examples include clarifying how giving corporations the same status and legal privileges as individuals, as well as the court's recent interpretation of what can be patented, have impacted the local cultural commons in different parts of the world. The mediating process should also help students examine the differences that separate the core cultural commons that sustain the identity and mutual support systems within their ethnic culture from the industrial, consumer culture where everything potentially is for sale—and where relationships between the producer and consumer are increasingly anonymous and based on the exploitation of young workers in factories located in the low-wage regions of the world.

Some professors may view as naïve and as a poor use of their special fields of knowledge the suggestion that their focus should be on the sustainable characteristics of the cultural commons, as well as on helping students acquire the communicative competence necessary for challenging various forms of enclosure that are both environmentally destructive and that create new forms of dependency upon a money economy. This response will reflect their lack of understanding of important characteristics of their discipline, as well as a lack of understanding of the complexity of the culture they, like their students, largely take for granted. As pointed out in the chapter on how Western philosophers have contributed to the Titanic mind-set driven by hubris and an excessive privileging of abstract thinking, most academic disciplines are

deeply ethnocentric, as well as lacking in an awareness of how their most fundamental interpretative frameworks have contributed to the high-status culture that is overshooting what the environment can sustain. Reframing future inquiry in their disciplines can be achieved by examining how the dominant interpretive frameworks in fields such as economics, philosophy, political science, literature, psychology, sociology, business administration, educational studies, and so forth, have contributed to the different forms of enclosure that are now being accelerated by the globalization of the Western system of production and consumption.

A topic as seemingly banal as helping students understand the difference between making something that is based on self-directed craft knowledge and skill, and industrial production, would require going into the history of industrial production, including the role that Taylorism played in creating the separation of intelligence from the act of production, thus contributing to the increasingly segmented and repetitious work of the assembly line. The history that students need to learn goes back even further to why the Luddites of the English Midlands protested the factory system, and then back to the forces that led to the enclosure of work itself—where the tradition of work that is returned was replaced by work that had to be paid for. It would also be important to learn why other cultures value different forms of production, why many commons-centered cultures have located their market in one location and held on specific days -- which is so unlike how our market-oriented mentality has made it an nearly inescapable presence.

There is also the need to bring an historical and cross cultural perspective to understanding the intergenerational sharing of a craft, which may range from glass blowing, making a musical instrument and a piece of furniture. The cultural assumptions that have created the status system that continues to influence how we think about the person who works with her/his hands can even be traced back to the ideas of Plato. Students would also benefit from exposure to the early history of the labor movement, as well as the economic and ideological forces that are now enclosing the local economy in so many different ways. Other seemingly prosaic aspects of the cultural and environmental commons need to be studied from a variety of disciplinary perspectives. Much of the research on these relationships has already been done, but it should be

presented to students in a way that helps them understand their own embodied/conceptual experiences as they participate in different activities of the local cultural and environmental commons. Most of the existing scholarship that should become part of the cultural mediating process has not been framed in terms of the most crucial issues we face today—which includes the need to reduce the cultural practices that are contributing to global warming and to the changes occurring in the chemistry of the world’s oceans.

The difficulty of mediating between these two cultural orientations is that most of the cultural patterns that need to be named, understood in terms of how they are part of an ecology of historical misconceptions, unexamined cultural assumptions, daily practices, ongoing languaging systems that reinforce many of the patterns most in need to being made explicit, are part of what both professors and their students too often take-for-granted. The ability to name and thus make explicit the taken-for-granted cultural patterns, and to understand how they interact with other taken-for-granted patterns, is essential for participation in the democratic process. If students lack the knowledge necessary for exercising communicative competence it will be impossible for them to resist the forces of enclosure as well as to conserve the practices and traditions that contribute to the self-sufficiency of the community. Indeed, it is more likely that they will not even be aware of different forms of enclosure—especially as they are usually represented as the latest expression of progress. As mentioned earlier, the failure of our schools and universities to identify the silences in the curriculum can be seen in how the tradition of habeas corpus has been enclosed by a combination of military, corporate, and market liberal ideologues, with only a minority of the population expressing concern. If students can’t name it, know its history and why it is important, they cannot protect it.

In summary, when we begin to consider the relationships and forms of knowledge that are part of the process of mediating between the two different cultural orientations, we find that computers are extremely limiting. In comparing the limitations of computer-based learning to what is required when teachers and professors view their responsibility as mediating between the two cultural orientations, we find the following: (1) As mediators teachers and professors need an in-depth knowledge of the local culture that others take-for-granted—including the taken-for-granted conceptual and moral foundations of the culture of consumerism as well as the moral traditions that are the

basis of the cultural commons social justice legacy. (2) The mediating process also requires face-to-face questioning, sharing of insights, developing the language for naming what previously was the un-named and un-recognized part of experience, and the continual comparing of the abstract representations of everyday experience with embodied experience. None of these requirements can be met by the experts who write the software, as they will be unable to represent accurately the local experiences, cultural contexts, and the characteristics of the bioregion. The best they can do is construct abstract scenarios and models that may replicate certain cultural patterns of decision-making—but they will still be abstract and thus reinforce the spectator and game-oriented mentality of students.

The use of constructivist theories to justify the increasing reliance upon computers is also problematic. What we should have learned from earlier approaches to student constructed learning during the late nineteen twenties and early thirties, but didn't, is that students, like many adults, are unaware that what is most critical to learn—namely, what is taken for granted. Constructivist approaches to learning in the child-centered classrooms did not lead students to ask about racism and gender bias, nor were they concerned about the destruction of the cultural and environmental commons that were coming under assault by the new technologies and market forces that changed the meaning of the word consumption from that of a disease to a social virtue. Learning about the skills and accumulated knowledge connected with most cultural commons activities will be beyond the grasp of students who have been indoctrinated into believing that they can only find oppression and the stunting of their creative insights if they learn from the traditions of their community. The questions that should have been asked by the early progressive educators, and by today's proponents of constructivist, computer-based learning are: Will reliance upon the students' immediate experience and insights enable them to learn about the medicinal characteristics of different plants, how to perform the skills connected with the building trades, how to prepare a meal that has the right nutritional ingredients, how to set up a loom and to play a game of chess, and what civil rights they should protect? Will they be able to recognize the political changes that characterized other democratic societies that allowed themselves to be transformed into fascist societies? What the constructivist-oriented classroom teachers will not do out of

fear of imposing their knowledge on supposedly vulnerable students is to ask the important questions. And this is exactly what the role of mediator requires—to ask the questions about the taken-for-granted and ecologically problematic aspects of the culture that few if any students have the background knowledge to ask. It is in knowing what the important questions are-- what taken-for-granted ways of thinking and experience need to be named and thus critically examined, and what needs to be changed and what needs to be intergenerationally renewed--that makes the constructivist approach to teaching and learning so inadequate. Indeed, given the silences about the nature of the ecological crises that characterize the thinking of constructivist learning advocates, it would not be incorrect to say that their approach is an example of the culturally and ecologically uninformed leading those who lack the background for recognizing what is happening to the environment on a global scale.

Computer based learning provides access to important and to what is often misleading information, as well as a sense of an abstract community that reduces personal vulnerabilities. However, it can never be the basis for learning about the experiential differences between the cultural commons and a money dependent existence--or about the cultural roots of the ecological crisis that the computer, as well as the people who use it, are complicit in deepening.

Chapter 6 Conserving in an Era of Ecological and Political Uncertainties

The misuse of our two most prominent political labels has become a predictable and an increasingly depressing part of daily experience. It's not just the Rush Limbaughs of the political right, but also highly respected commentators on political developments such as Daniel Shorr and Paul Krugman who are complicit in turning our political language into an Orwellian mind game where the word conservative really means market liberal, and where liberal is used to refer to environmentalists and people working to conserve what remains of our traditions of civil liberties and other aspects of the cultural and environmental commons. Authoritarian governments came to power between the two world wars when the democratic institutions became too weakened, and the people wanted the security of a police state over what they perceived as the rising tide of social chaos. We are now on the cusp where a major disruption in the foreign sources of energy, or a decision on the part of the central banks of China and Japan no longer to support our currency, could lead many of the Americans already supporting the dismantling of our democratic institutions to give their support to a form of government that places a higher priority on security and fighting internal and foreign terrorists. In short, the misuse of our political labels is not just a problem of semantics that might interest academics. Rather, the stakes are much higher. What is at issue here is whether the collective state of ignorance and indifference to anything other than private interests contributes to moving down the slippery slope leading to an authoritarian government that is also responsible for further exacerbating the ecological crises spreading around the world.

The dangers associated with misusing the political labels of conservative and liberal are being magnified by the development and increasingly widespread use of surveillance technologies by the government, and by the further centralization of economic and political power in corporations and the politicians they control. The rise of Christian fundamentalists as a major anti-democratic force in society, as well as in the halls of Congress, the White House, and on the decisions of the Supreme Court, represents yet another source of danger. Not to be overlooked is the way public schools and universities continue to reinforce the cultural assumptions that gave conceptual

direction and moral legitimacy to the early phase of the industrial revolution—and to the digital phase we are now entering. It is difficult to determine whether the myth of progress, or a condition of mental exhaustion resulting from daily over exposure to commercial deceptions, is responsible for the way media pundits, academics, journalists (even those writing for the more highly regarded newspapers) and the general public are complicit in sustaining the Orwellian charade that characterizes our political discourse.

What is especially baffling is the way in which environmentalists and people working to renew the cultural commons (the non-monetized aspects of individual and community life) are so militant in their self-identification as liberal and progressive activists. The irony is that by labeling themselves as liberals they enable the political and corporate forces that view what remains of the cultural and environmental commons as markets that are yet to be exploited to stake their claim to being the conservatives. The self-identification as liberal and progressive activists supports the illusion of occupying the moral high ground in a society that is driven by greed and the addiction to hyper-consumerism.

While claiming the label of conservative, the market liberals use the media and the shopping malls to promote the idea that consumerism makes a reality of individual freedom. The three and four car garages are also taken as signs of unending progress. The genuine conservatives working to protect the environment and the cultural commons, if we are to take their on-the-ground practices seriously, accept the hijacking of the label of conservative by the market liberals and thus find themselves in a double bind. The key metaphors underlying the different interpretations of the liberal agenda, in effect, support the environmentally destructive practices that genuine conservatives are working to reverse. The result is that by identifying with the language of liberalism, which still carries forward the cultural assumptions taken for granted by such early liberal writers as John Locke, Adam Smith, and John Stuart Mill, the efforts of environmentalists as well as their criticisms of the industrial/consumer culture are both muted and in fundamental ways miss the mark.

As most environmentalists are also aligned with scientists, they are further pulled into the conceptual and linguistic orbit of liberalism. What is often overlooked is that the

Industrial Revolution would not have been possible if it were not based on modern science and its underlying cultural assumptions. Early scientists such as Isaac Newton and Johannes Kepler made an especially important contribution to the rapid development of the industrial mode of production, which continues today, when they introduced the idea that all aspects of life, including ways of thinking, should be understood as machine-like. As Kepler put it, “My aim is show that the celestial machine is to be likened not to a divine organism but to a clockwork.” The mechanistic way of thinking can currently be seen in how the parts of a plant cell are named “recycling center,” “solar station,” “powerhouse,” and “production center”. Acclaimed scientists such as Richard Dawkins refers to the human body as a “survival machine” and E. O. Wilson writes in *Consilience* (1998) that “the surest way to grasp the complexity in the brain, as in any other biological system, is to think of it as an engineering problem”. The machine metaphor provides a way of understanding brains, humans, plants, and every other aspect of our universe as having component parts that can be taken apart, experimented with in order to increase both efficiency and predictability. Environmentalists are heavily reliant on this pattern of thinking, even as they work to conserve habitats and species—and express concern that the rate of global warming holds out the possibility of dire consequences for future generations. But they continue to refuse to identify with the political label of conservative—even though some environmentalists refer to the importance of preserving wilderness and habitats, and that conservation was part of the vocabulary of early environmentalists.

There are several other consequences of relying upon Western science that helps to trap environmentalists in the linguistic camp shared with the market liberals who also rely upon science and the steady stream of market-oriented technologies that it contributes to. What is missing from the liberal and progressive way of thinking that most scientists also identify with is an awareness of limits, as well as differences in cultural ways of knowing. For them, progress should not be limited in any way, which also holds for scientific inquiry—even if the inquiry leads to genetic discoveries that can be patented by corporations or to technologies that transform water as part of the commons into a commodity that only the wealthy can afford. Esteemed both as a scientist and an environmentalist, E. O. Wilson articulates the widely held belief that

science is and will continue to be the basis of human progress. In Consilience, he writes that

By any reasonable measure of achievement, the faith of the Enlightenment thinkers in science was justified. Today the greatest divide within humanity is not between races, or religions, or even, as widely believed, between the literate and illiterate. It is the chasm that separates the scientific from the pre-scientific. Without the instruments and accumulated knowledge of the natural sciences—physics, chemistry, and biology—humans are trapped in a cognitive prison. P. 45

Later in the book that frequently crosses the line that separates science from scientism, Wilson suggests that the world's major religions, which he claims were earlier adaptive behaviors that contributed to human survival in the face of the nature's process of natural selection, should now be replaced with a new epic narrative. This narrative is the story of how humans and other species evolved through natural selection. He further argues that scientists now have an added responsibility, which will only be carried out when "science for its part will test every assumption about the human condition and in time uncover the bedrock of moral and religious sentiments." (p. 265). As Wendell Berry observed in The Miracle of Life (2000), Wilson possesses an imperialist view of the mission of science. And as I would add, it is no less imperialistic than the economic and anti-democratic agenda of today's mislabeled conservatives.

Wilson is not alone in assigning to science a key role for ensuring that the liberal vision of unending progress will be fulfilled. Carl Sagan, in a book with the Promethean title of In a Demon Haunted World: Science as a Candle in the Dark (1997), argues that the scientific mode of inquiry is the only legitimate approach to knowledge. As the following statement demonstrates, he overlooks, along with Wilson, the scientists' role in measuring intelligence through the use of English language test, the eugenics movement of the last century, as well as the scientists' responsibility for degrading natural systems with the tens of thousands of synthetic chemicals that were assumed at the time to represent progress in bringing nature more under human control. Again, the hubris that many scientists share with liberal thinkers can be seen in Sagan's claim that all non-

scientific approaches to knowledge are the sources of backwardness and ignorance.

According to Sagan,

One of the reasons for its success is that science has built-in error-correcting machinery at its very heart. Some may consider this an overboard generalization, but to me every time we exercise self-criticism, every time we test our ideas against the outside world, we are doing science. When we are self-indulgent and uncritical, when we confuse hopes and facts, we slide into pseudoscience and superstition. P. 30

The myth of unending progress and the prejudices of an ethnocentric world view that prevent recognizing that ecologically centered cultures conserve the intergenerational knowledge of how to live within the limits and possibilities of their bioregions are clearly present in Sagan's statement, as they are in the thinking of the market liberals that have hijacked the label of conservatism.

The list of scientists who have made important contributions to their special fields of inquiry, but have also traveled well down the slippery slope of scientism, also includes Francis Crick who was the co-winner of the Nobel Prize for the discovery of the nature and role of the DNA. In The Astonishing Hypothesis: The Scientific Search for the Soul (1994) he claimed that science would shortly be able to "explain all aspects of the behavior of our brains, including those of musicians, mystics, and mathematicians" (p. 259). Computer scientists such as Hans Moravec and Ray Kurzweil go even further by claiming that when computers replace humans in nature's process of natural selection progress will no longer be dependent upon the uncertainties of human intelligence.

The slippery slope of scientism has often led scientists to align their quest for knowledge with the interests of authoritarian political regimes that have eliminated the restraints of moral values on their own behavior as well as what scientists were free to investigate. Again, the quest for progress, which will require the collaboration of scientists with the marketing and propaganda departments of the pharmaceutical industry, can be seen in Lee Silver's recent proposal that scientists, now that they possess the technical skills, should take on the task of remaking Eden—which is the title of his book. The goal of this professor of genetics at Princeton University is to engineer a new "Gene Rich" strain of humans who will provide the cognitive and moral leadership for the larger

class of “Naturals” who will provide the physical labor and service functions in society. The “Naturals” will be the class of people who are the result of non-scientifically supervised human reproduction. Less politically ominous, though no less an expression of the hubris that underlies the faux conservatives efforts to globalize their market liberal agenda of monetizing more aspects daily life while privatizing poverty, is Stephen Hawking’s claim that when the scientists and mathematicians settle on what constitutes the “Theory of Everything” then “we shall all, philosophers, scientists, and just ordinary people, be able to take part in the discussion of why it is that we and the universe exists (A Brief History of Time, 1998, p. 175.).

It would be wrong to assume that the majority of scientists would agree with the extreme proposals of such leaders in their field as Wilson, Crick, and Hawking. However, it would be safe to claim that while scientists are addressing environmental issues and even developing a “green” chemistry, most continue to take for granted the core cultural assumptions that underlie today’s varied expressions of liberalism. While some environmental scientists may be wavering on the question of whether human progress, even when based on scientific knowledge, is inevitable, it is still accurate to claim that they share with Wilson, Crick, and Hawking the ethnocentrism that has been a hallmark of liberalism since time of John Locke and Adam Smith.

Understanding why scientists, even environmental scientists engaged in conservation efforts, identify with liberalism rather than with conservatism needs to take account of the cultural assumptions they share with both market and social justice liberals. These assumptions include thinking that language is a conduit through which objective ideas and data can be passed (the sender/receiver view of language), that technology is both culturally neutral while at the same time the expression of progress, that the individual is the basic social unit who engages in rational thought that is free of cultural influence, and that Western approaches to knowledge and moral values represent the most advanced state of human development—and, for some, human “evolution.”

In the book titled Tradition (1981), Edward Shils identifies science, along with other patterns of Enlightenment thinking, as examples of an “anti-tradition tradition.” Shils’ book is not an argument for embracing traditions. Rather, it is an explanation of the complexity of the traditions that are an inescapable part of everyday life. For Shils,

traditions are as complex as culture, and they are just as taken for granted. His basic argument is that tradition is the word that best represents all the symbolic and material expressions of culture that have been passed down and survived over four generations. That is, living traditions today go back beyond the Book of Genesis to the mythopoetic narratives that explained the nature and purpose of human existence, to the ethnocentric thinking of the West's major philosophers, to the shift from when labor was returned to when labor became part of a money economy, to the religious wars that led to enshrining the separation of church and state in the Constitution, to the patterns of metacommunication, and even to the anti-tradition traditions of thinking promoted in our universities and corporate dominated media.

As the nature of traditions is misrepresented in our educational institutions and in the media, and as the complex nature of traditions needs to be accurately understood in order to clarify the dangers of misusing our political language, other key aspects of Shils' thinking need to be presented. Shils does not write about the traditions of non-Western cultures; rather, his focus is on correcting the misconceptions that are widely promoted by our educational institutions and by people with a vested interest in representing traditions as obstacles of progress. What they overlook is that science, technology, market forces, and abstract theories that are supposed to be the engines of progress are also examples of traditions that give little thought to the importance of the traditions they overturn. Shils mixes careful observation of the everyday enactment of traditions with an examination of the widely held misconceptions. His insights include the following: all traditions are passed on by willing and generally unconscious acts of humans; some traditions should not have been constituted in the first place, and while some traditions change too slowly other traditions (such as our traditions of habeas corpus and the right to privacy) may disappear without our awareness of the importance of what has been lost. He further observes that when a tradition disappears it cannot be reconstituted as it was before; thus his warning is to be mindful of the traditions that are being overturned, forgotten, or denigrated as obstacles to progress.

Shils' book, which required 330 pages to explain what the anti-tradition progressive thinker dismisses by treating the word tradition as a pejorative term, is important in that it makes explicit a major silence in the thinking of most

scientists—especially the scientists that have traveled will down the slippery slope of scientism. These silences are also shared by the two major traditions of market and social justice liberalism. Shils makes a further observation about a misconception held by various social groups. In order to clarify the nature of this misconception, which is that traditions are inherently static, he suggests that traditions should be thought of as like a plant that has roots deep in the ground that are largely invisible. Some of the roots are already dead while others are dying. At the same time new roots are being established. What can be observed above ground also involves a mix of the new that needs to be cared for and the dying that needs to be pruned back in order to ensure the overall health of the plant. According to Shils, people who do not have this understanding of traditions, and that think of traditions as unchanging, should be called traditionalists.

The word “traditionalist”, in effect, should also be understood and used as a political term that refers to the social agenda of different groups in society. For example, when the agenda of these groups is to make the present society conform to a distant and culturally different past, they should be called “reactionary traditionalists.” “Extremists” is also a more accurate descriptor than the current practice by labeling these groups as social conservatives. The Christian fundamentalists are a prime example of reactionary traditionalists in that they ignore how the development of powerful traditions have altered what they take to be the literal word of God. These traditions include the transition from the spoken to the printed word that altered human consciousness in fundamental ways, as well as the different cultural traditions of thinking that influenced the many translations of the Bible. What is being ignored by referring to the Christian fundamentalists as social conservatives is that their highly organized and successful political efforts to force the rest of society to live by the moral codes that were interpreted by ancient pastoral cultures as God’s communication with them is basically anti-democratic. Just as some influential scientists are taking us down the slippery political slope, the Christian fundamentalists and many evangelicals are taking us down an even more perilous slope toward an authoritarian future where they are to act as God’s political agents until the Second Coming.

Being mindful of which traditions should be renewed as contributing to an ecologically sustainable future is also being threatened by another totalizing explanatory

framework that makes human decisions largely irrelevant. Scientists such as E. O. Wilson and Richard Dawkins are leaders in the effort to extend the theory of evolution in a way that explains how cultures are also subject to the process of natural selection. Culture, they claim, is the aggregate of “memes” that correspond to the “genes” of the biological world. Memes include all the traditions that are re-enacted in everyday life; thus they include the laws, music, business values and practices, modes of inquiry, agricultural practices—even the way in which we address an envelope and greet a friend. According to this extension of the theory of evolution, the memes (traditions as well as fads that do not survive long enough to become traditions) that make up a culture are subject to the same test of Darwinian fitness that determines which aggregate of genes will be selected for survival. Wilson’s observation that “through natural selection, the environment ultimately selects which genes do the prescribing” also applies to how the environment selects which cultural memes will survive. Wilson makes the point more directly that it is the environment that selects which genes (and by extension, memes) will survive in the following statement: “brains that choose wisely possess superior Darwinian fitness, meaning that statistically they survive longer and leave more offspring than brains that choose badly.” (1998, p. 165).

What Wilson, Dawkins, and philosophers such as Daniel Dennett fail to recognize is that the theory of natural selection can easily be used to give the appearance of scientific legitimation to the ideology of market liberals who have also made “survival of the fittest” their basic assumption. Market liberals have long held the idea that the market selects the most efficient and profitable businesses to survive. For them the market performs the same task as the environment of weeding out the less well adapted. Market liberals can easily adopt the theory of memes, and use it to explain how the forces of nature promote the spread of the giant Wal-Marts across the countryside, and why small businesses are having to shut their doors. The larger implications of the theory of how memes are selected for survival by the contingencies of the environment is that it can also be used to justify the destruction of the traditions of self-sufficiency of non-Western cultures on the grounds that they are less well adapted than the scientific, industrially based culture of the West. The irony is that the supposedly better adapted culture is overshooting the sustaining capacity of the natural environment, while the

cultures that are being colonized and losing their intergenerational traditions of relative self-sufficiency that have a smaller adverse impact on natural systems are the ones that, according to the theory of how memes are selected for survival, have not met the test of Darwinian fitness.

The Enlightenment way of thinking about tradition, which is another example of an anti-tradition tradition, has also influenced self-labeled conservatives, neo-conservatives, and social justice liberals. The lumping together of self-labeled conservatives and social justice liberals needs further clarification as, on the surface, it suggests confused thinking. If we adhere to the current practice of most academics, media pundits, self-identified conservatives such as Rush Limbaugh, Bill O'Reilly, and even go back to the faux conservatism of William F. Buckley Jr., we find that their core assumption is that social progress is best achieved when free markets remain unrestricted by government regulation. It is doubtful that few of the self-labeled conservatives have ever read Adam Smith's The Wealth of Nations, or his other book, Theory of Moral Sentiments (1759), where he argues that the system of free enterprise within a face-to-face community has built in moral restrictions. That is, when the owner of a business encounters on a daily basis the members of the community whom he may later become dependent upon for assistance, and if he wants to experience civil relations with them, he is less likely to exploit them. Like so many other aspects of the thinking of self-labeled conservatives, they take statements by the classical liberal theorists out of context and treat them as universals—such as Smith's statements that a key drive of humans is to “truck, barter, and trade” and that an “invisible hand” ensures the progressive nature of free markets.

What is surprising is the failure of political commentators to ask what the self-identified conservatives wanted to conserve. Common sense suggests that the promotion of an economic system that makes a virtue of constant change, as well as the destruction of the cultural and environmental commons, should not be labeled “conservative.” The political agenda of Buckley's National Review, as well as his television program, *Firing Line*, which was to promote a free market economy and to reduce the regulatory function of government, including its role in providing assistance for those mired in poverty, was made explicit in each issue of the National Review. Buckley was not reticent about either

his political agenda or his ability to demean those who questioned it. Like a virus spreading through all levels of our political discourse, the proponents of market liberalism who have hijacked the label of conservatism have been given a free pass by the widespread failure to assess whether the label of conservatism matched up with what the market liberals did not try to hide. In addition to the National Review, which should have led to recognizing the mindlessness of referring to market liberals as conservatives, the self-labeled neo-conservatives (a label that still goes unquestioned) published a number of books promoting the virtues of unrestrained capitalism. In addition to Irving Kristol's influential Reflections of a Neoconservative (1983), Michael Novak wrote The Spirit of Capitalism (1982), and George Gilder followed with an equally pro-capitalist tome, Wealth and Poverty (1981).

Even George Lakoff, a linguist on the faculty of the University of California, has fallen into the trap of using our two most prominent political labels in a formulaic manner. This is especially surprising since he has written about how the use of language frames what we are able to think about. His best selling book, Don't Think of an Elephant: Know Your Values, and Frame the Debate (2004), is an outstanding example of how authors often ignore the advice they want others to follow. Many of his insights about how right wing extremists have succeeded in becoming the dominant force in American politics are essentially correct. And his explanation of how the selection of metaphors, and the analogies associated with them, frame what will be the focus of attention, as well as what will be ignored, is equally insightful.

Unfortunately, Lakoff ignores his own advice when he urges liberals to use the metaphor of "progress" in carrying their fight to the self-labeled conservatives. That is, by ignoring that the right wing extremists whom he identifies as conservative are actually a coalition of market liberal and Christian fundamentalists, he has accepted their take-over (framing) of the word conservative. At the same time, he ignores that a number of the cultural assumptions underlying the progressive and nurturing politics he associates with liberals are also shared by the self-labeled conservatives working to globalize their free market agenda. One of these liberal assumptions is that a knowledge of history is largely irrelevant in a progress-oriented society. Lakoff demonstrates a similar disregard for the facts of history when he cites Adam Smith's principle of a laissez-faire economic

system as one of the conceptual and moral foundations of today's conservatives. He also identifies both the CATO and American Enterprise Institutes as conservative think tanks even though both institutes have posted on their website that their primary political agenda is the promotion of free markets and a reduced role for government.

Lakoff's formulaic labeling of Christian fundamentalists as well as Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia as conservatives fails to take account of what conservatives in the tradition of James Madison and the other framers of the Constitution wanted to conserve. Namely, the checks and balances between the three branches of government, the separation of church and state, and an independent judiciary. Unfortunately, the word "reactionary" is not part of today's political vocabulary, and Lakoff makes no effort to introduce it as a more accurate way to represent the coalition of market liberal and Christian fundamentalists—as well as the thinking of Antonin Scalia. The fundamental difference between a genuine conservative in the tradition of Edmund Burke and a reactionary political agenda was clearly brought out in a speech that Antonin Scalia presented at the University of Chicago in 2002. As part of his presentation on "God's Justice and Ours," he acknowledged that he did not subscribe to the "conventional fallacy that the Constitution is a 'living document' that is—a text that means from age to age what society (perhaps the Courts) think it ought to mean." In effect, Scalia was claiming that the political consensus reached over the last two hundred or so years on social justice issues should not be conserved. Instead, the achievements of the democratic process must be rejected in favor of using the doctrine of "original intent" of the men who wrote the Constitution as the guide for judging which laws are appropriate for today's citizens to live by. The analog for understanding a reactionary political agenda could not have been more clearly stated. The "Truths" of the founding fathers are to take precedent over the achievements in recent times. A conservative in the tradition of Edmund Burke would want to conserve the political achievements of the recent past—including, within our cultural context, the democratic process itself.

Generally overlooked in current commentaries on how the doctrine of "original intent" would allow judges to strike down all governmental laws not anticipated by the writers of the Constitution is that the laws that limit the abuses of corporations and in other ways perform a regulatory function would be struck down as not meeting the test of

“original intent.” With a Supreme Court still short of a majority that believes in this doctrine, which is a subterfuge that hides these justices’ market liberal orientation, President George W. Bush is using the practice of “Presidential signing” to rewrite legislation that was intended to limit corporate abuses of the environment and other sources of injustices.

Having misrepresented both the market liberal and Christian fundamentalists as conservatives, Lakoff goes on to misrepresent genuine conservative-oriented groups as models of liberal and progressive thinking. These groups include “spiritual progressives,” “civil liberties progressives,” progressive environmentalists and ethnic groups that are part of what he refers to as engaged in “identity politics.” What Lakoff ignores by his reliance on the decades-long formulaic use of the labels of conservative and liberal is that the primary focus of the American Civil Liberties Union as well as other civil libertarians is conserving the human rights guaranteed in the Constitution and the Bill of Rights. Also overlooked by Lakoff is that environmentalists are working to conserve what remains of wilderness, viable habitats, and the diversity of species—and that the groups he categorizes as “spiritual progressives” are attempting to conserve the Social Gospel teachings of Jesus. Groups engaged in what Lakoff refers to as “identity politics” are attempting to conserve their heritage against the eroding influence of the market forces that President George W. Bush is promoting on a global basis.

What is especially baffling is the way supposedly thoughtful people participate in the Orwellian language game where the historical meaning of words, as well as accountability in their current use, are being ignored. The label of conservative is now given to the people who want to turn more of daily life into markets, while the label of liberal and progressive is given to the people who want to conserve the rights guaranteed in Constitution as well as its protections against the emergence of a tyrannical system of government. They are also working to restore the viability of natural systems.

Many of today’s “liberal” commentators are old enough to remember the mantra of General Electric, which was “progress is our most important product.” Today, the word “progress” continues to give legitimacy to every new consumer product, regardless of its destructive impact on the environment and communities. Indeed, the proponents of an industrial, consumer oriented culture, from its early beginning in the Midlands of

England to the present, have an equal if not better claim to being the agents of progress. But it has been a form of progress that has increased the dependence of people on a money economy, while undermining the intergenerational traditions that are the basis of community self sufficiency. The industrial form of progress has also been a major contributor to the degraded state of the Earth's natural systems. What is being overlooked is that the liberals who want to identify themselves as the guardians of progress do not recognize that many of their social justice achievements represent a further extension of earlier social justice-oriented traditions. They also ignore that the industrial culture has already won over the public's thinking of progress in terms of the new technologies that lure them to the shopping malls—and further into personal debt.

Christian fundamentalists can make the claim that the increasing social chaos and environmental degradation means they are experiencing the only form of progress that matters: progress toward the end of time when Armageddon will be followed by the rapture. Indeed there may be more evidence supporting their view of progress than Lakoff's claim on behalf of environmentalists and civil libertarians who are losing ground on a variety of fronts. Like so many of the god-words in the vocabulary both of market and social justice liberals, the ritualistic act of repeating them seems more important than actually assessing what is happening in society and to the environment.

The mislabeling of market liberals and Christian fundamentalists as conservatives reflects more than the conceptual laziness of formulaic thinkers. It also indicates a lack of understanding of the ways in which the word conserving more accurately represents the life forming and sustaining processes of biological and cultural reproduction over the generations. The word conservatism also has a history that reflects, depending on the spokesperson, political wisdom as well as the efforts of men to justify various privileges and forms of oppression. The basic problem is that few university students are exposed to the history of Western political theory, and thus are unable to recognize the fundamental differences between today's values and policies that had their origins in the thinking of John Locke and a partial reading of Adam Smith, and today's conservative thinkers such as Wendell Berry and Vandana Shiva whose writings on sustainable environments and communities represent important expansions on the values of conservatism that can be traced back to Edmund Burke, and more recently to William

Morris, Michael Oakeshott, and T. S. Eliot. And few students who identify themselves as conservatives, and who are collecting evidence of their professors' social justice liberal biases, are aware of the contradiction in how their political leaders are undermining habeas corpus whose roots go back to the signing of the Magna Charta in 1215, as well as undermining the traditions of privacy and local democracy—which the market-oriented federal government and the World Trade Organization are limiting in fundamental ways.

One of the reasons that our educational institutions no longer require students to learn about the traditions of political thought that might possibly reduce their current acceptance of an Orwellian political discourse is that most academics take-for-granted the cultural assumptions that are the basis both of market and social justice liberalism. Social justice liberals are critical of the excesses of the market liberals, such as the vast maldistribution in wealth and lack of equal opportunity within society. And some are critics of capitalism itself. Nevertheless, most social justice liberals share with the market liberals the following assumptions: the idea that change is inherently progressive; that increasing the autonomy of the individual is a primary goal of the educational process; that science and technology are culturally neutral and at the same time the expression of progress; that a mechanistic model of thinking will lead to progress in such fields as medicine, education, agriculture, economics, and the various sciences; that language is a conduit through which objective knowledge and data can be passed to others—including computers; and that the environment can best be understood as an exploitable resource.

The same silences are also shared by both market and social justice liberals. These include an awareness of the nature and importance of the world's diverse cultural commons and the complex knowledge and moral systems they are based upon, and an awareness of how the forms of knowledge designated and promoted in universities as high-status support the expansion of industrial/consumer-oriented culture. These silences can be traced to the ethnocentrism that is such a common feature of most areas of academic inquiry—with the exceptions being in the fields of anthropology and cultural linguistics. Additional silences keep students from learning that the cultural assumptions about individualism, progress, and the ethnocentrism built into the dominant way rational thought is represented were constituted before there was an awareness of ecological

limits, and that the long-standing Western project of colonization would lead not to acceptance--but to violent rejection. There is near universal silence within universities that these earlier patterns of thinking are encoded in the layered nature of metaphorical thinking where the root metaphors (deep cultural assumptions) frame which analogies will be relied upon as advancing understanding—and how the prevailing analogies are encoded in image words such as data, individualism, tradition, liberal, conservative, and so forth.

One of the consequences of universities reinforcing the language that has contributed to the pursuit of individual interests in an increasingly technologically mediated and monetized world is that students are left without the language necessary for thinking about ecologically informed and community-centered alternatives. The social justice liberalism of most academics also accounts for why the history of modern Western political theory is viewed as largely irrelevant. What is important to them is overcoming the class, gender, and racial barriers that limit marginalized groups from participating more fully in a market economy. This is the same economy, we have to continually remind ourselves, that is overshooting the sustaining capacity of natural systems and that is the source of the colonization now being so fiercely resisted in some parts of the world. What these social justice liberals ignore is how to frame their agenda for providing marginalized groups with adequate housing, medical care, meaningful employment, an adequate diet, and quality education in ways that strengthens the local cultural commons that has a smaller adverse impact on world's natural systems. Their vision of what constitutes social justice ignores that as individuals participate more fully in the non-monetized cultural commons of their communities they will develop personal talents and interests, and experience mentoring relationships in ways that are not possible in environmentally destructive consumer relationships.

Why conserving in an era of ecological and political uncertainties is more vital today than relying upon such verbal abstractions as the words “progress,” “individual freedom” and “emancipation,” must now be addressed. To make the point in a slightly different way: Why the words “conserving” as a daily practice and “conservatism” as a source of political wisdom must now be reclaimed will be one of the most important and difficult tasks we now face if we want to check the current threats to our democratic

institutions, as well as contribute to the transition to a less environmentally destructive form of culture. Rescuing these words from misuse by both market and social justice liberals, as well as from their embrace by the various Christian evangelical and fundamentalists, will reverse a fundamental deception of our times—and hopefully lead to holding the users of our political language to a higher level of accountability. The deception is little recognized, but it has huge political consequences. The victims include older people who are more deeply aware of their temperamental conservatism as well as the multiple failures of liberal promises, and thus are more cautious about accepting all change as the expression of progress. And they tend to identify themselves as conservatives. This is seldom an informed conservatism based on the political wisdom of Burke, Oakeshott, Madison, and such recent spokespersons as Berry and Shiva. It is more of a lifestyle conservatism that leads to acting on blind faith that the politicians and religious fundamentalists who call themselves conservatives, neo-conservatives, and social conservatives, are not going to dismantle the conserving nature of the Constitution, including the checks and balances in our system of government. Perhaps if these faux conservatives were to be “outed” these lifestyle conservatives would not vote for politicians that are changing our system of government in ways that will allow the industrial/consumer oriented culture to become an even more dominant aspect of daily life—and that further increases the vulnerability of individuals and communities.

The first step in achieving a modicum of accountability and ecological sanity in the use of the terms “conserving” and “conservatism” is to identify the different ways in which life forming and sustaining processes are inherently conserving. I shall then discuss the political wisdom that can be found in the writings of some philosophical conservatives, and then explain why the cultural assumptions underlying the language of liberalism have contributed to the further enclosure of the cultural and environmental commons. As the characteristics of the cultural and environmental commons are more fully understood it will be clear why we need to rectify our political language if we are to avoid the double bind of using language that legitimates, in the name of progress and individual freedom, the destruction of the cultural traditions and natural systems we are most dependent upon.

What is seldom if ever discussed in our educational institutions is how the values and ideas most often identified with both market and social justice liberalism had their origins in the abstract thinking that has been a dominant characteristic of Western philosophy. The early political and economic theorists were often responding to the injustices of their era, but their theories were represented as having universal validity—which was a clear indication of their ethnocentric thinking. What also should be kept in mind is that these early theorists were unaware of how the language they used carried forward many of the misconceptions of previous generations within their own culture. They were also unaware of the complex nature of the traditions of different cultures. As a result their contribution to the vocabulary of today's market and social justice liberals did not take account of the cultural influence on thought and behavior that has its roots in learning the languaging processes of the culture that the individual is born into. Nor were they aware of the metaphorical nature of language and that the words that more contemporary philosophers took-for-granted, such as individualism, freedom, progress, and so forth, did not have the same meaning (or any meaning) for members of different language communities.

A strong case can be made that the messianic drive of both market and social justice liberals to universalize their respective agendas (free markets and consumerism for the market liberals and democracy and freedom for the social justice liberals) is partly attributable to one of the main characteristics associated with a print based approach to knowledge. Put simply, knowledge encoded in print is inherently abstract. That is, without the largely culturally derived interpretative framework that is part of the individual's experience, which is also influenced by an awareness of the multiple layered nature of context, personal memory, and taken-for-granted ways in which the culture represents the attributes of the participants in the relationships, what appears in print is more prone to be treated as having universal validity. Why reliance on print-based forms of storage and communication lead to less awareness of the traditions re-enacted in daily life, and why oral based cultures lead to a greater awareness of and respect for traditions also needs to be considered when attempting to understand why both market and social justice liberals are often viewed as promoting cultural colonization. The still widely promoted view in universities that rational thought is independent of the influence of

culture also contributes to equating rational thought with objective thought. And if it is objective, it then is presumed to have universal validity.

Unlike the origins of the vocabularies of the market and social justice liberals, the different conserving processes (biological, psychological, linguistic, along with taken-for-granted beliefs and practices) should alert us to the danger of letting the words “conserving” and “conservatism” be used as code words for an economic system that exploits different aspects of people’s lives and degrades the environment. Even at the biological level, the liberal vocabulary continues to be overly reliant on the word progress. Not only scientists who engage in futuristic predictions, such as Francis Crick, Hans Moravec, and Lee Silver who are promoters of the myth of progress, but ordinary scientists also equate progress with ever greater reliance upon a mechanistic and thus experimental way of understanding biological processes. As mentioned earlier, even scientists who are working to conserve species and habitats tend to identify themselves as liberals. But this formulaic way of thinking does not take account of important recent scientific discoveries, such as the nature and role of the DNA. In explaining how genes carry the instructions that govern the formation of cells, organs, and other physical characteristics of plants and animals scientists are describing what is essentially a conserving process. At the same time mutations are taking place that lead to various rates of change—not all of which can be interpreted as the expression of progress. The important point here is that the process of biological reproduction in no way represents the modern liberal idea of change as being a linear form of progress. This is overlooked by E. O. Wilson when he argues that the story of evolution should replace the world’s religions. Computer scientists writing about how computers are now displacing humans in the process of natural selection, also view evolution as linear and progressive.

The languaging processes that sustain everyday life also reproduce (conserve) the patterns of thinking and values that are distinctive to different cultures. The mythopoetic narratives and powerful evocative experiences that are the basis of the metaphors that provide the culture’s schemata of understanding are intergenerationally passed along—often with only minor variation. The reader who thinks this is an overgeneralization needs to consider how the mythopoetic narratives in the Book of Genesis were conserved in the genderized and anthropocentric metaphors that still represent God

as a stern patriarchal figure and the environment as an exploitable resource. The skeptical reader should also consider how a cultural orientation that emphasizes that change is the dominant characteristic of life actually conserves one of the more problematic metaphorically-based interpretative frameworks. For example, such acclaimed scientists as E. O. Wilson and Francis Crick continue to think of biological and even mental processes as machine-like, which conserves the analog that Johannes Kepler (1571-1630) urged the scientists of his day to adopt as an alternative to thinking of the universe as a divine organism.

The languaging processes—spoken and written word, forms of narratives and ceremonies, patterns of meta-communication, metaphorical nature of the built culture—also carry forward (conserve) the moral values of the culture. Thus, when children learn such words as “weed,” “wasteland,” “wilderness” and so forth, they are also learning at a pre-conscious level the moral values of the culture. Language not only communicates about relationships; it also carries forward over many generations how the culture understands the attributes of the participants in the relationship. The way in which the attributes of a weed or nature are understood influences what constitutes moral behavior in how they are to be treated. When a plant is labeled as a weed it is then moral to ignore further study of its characteristics and how it fits within the local ecology. Killing the “weed” is thus considered to be a moral practice. Similarly, when a person is labeled as a “terrorist” it is moral to kill him rather than inquire about the political issues that drive him to such extreme behavior. To cite another example, the culture’s way of understanding the attributes of women led to discriminatory practices that were not considered as immoral—until recently. The culture’s language based moral codes even extend into the chemistry lab where new scientific discoveries were assumed to be the expression of progress and thus introduced into the environment by the tens of thousands. Rachel Carson’s book, Silent Spring (1962), helped to illuminate the hubris and incomplete knowledge of the scientists who were on a moral mission to bring more of nature under human control.

Even the most vocal liberal thinkers such as John Dewey and Paulo Freire, both of whom have had world-wide influence, conserved in their prescriptions for educational reforms the core assumptions of the culture they criticized. Both conserved the

ethnocentrism of their respective cultures when they argued that there is only one legitimate approach to knowledge: experimental inquiry for Dewey and critical reflection for Freire. A second cultural assumption conserved in their theories is that constant change is inherently progressive in nature. This assumption partly accounts for their indifference (indeed, hostility) toward addressing what needs to be conserved in the culture. Both Dewey and Freire also took-for-granted the industrial way of viewing the environment as a natural resources--that is, as an economic resource.

The more important point is that even the most progress-oriented liberal theorist, scientist, technologist, and social reformer are part of the intergenerational process of carrying forward the traditions of their culture. The languaging processes they are first socialized to accept at a taken-for-granted level of awareness are the primary source of this conserving process. Depending upon the assumptions of the culture, the traditions may be given varying degrees of individualized expression. There may be other sources that promote or inhibit change, such as a form of education that is based primarily on print and thus devalues the spoken narratives. The different forms of intergenerational knowledge and skills, including mentoring relationships, may also be lost when computers are relied upon to mediate thought, communication, and relationships. Mythopoetic narratives that identify certain ideas, values, and behaviors as leading to a life in purgatory, as well as such contemporary ideologies as market liberalism, may also inhibit the reform of certain traditions.

To sum up, cultures are inherently conserving in nature partly for reasons that have to do with the way in which much of a person's cultural knowledge is taken-for-granted. The challenge is to know which taken-for-granted cultural assumptions and daily practices need to be made explicit and assessed in terms of their impact on natural systems. They also need to be assessed in terms of whether they contribute to the self-sufficiency of the community in ways that reduce dependence upon the money economy. To reject all traditions as sources of backwardness and unjust is itself one of the more destructive and mindless traditions, as is the notion that the primary purpose of critical reflection is to promote change. The greater challenge today is whether critical reflection will be used to conserve what contributes to resisting the further spread of markets and the further degradation of the environment.

While many of today's social justice liberals claim to being proponents and the primary guardians of critical reflection, the study of the history of philosophical conservatism would suggest that sorting through the various interpretations of conservatism to find what constitutes genuine political wisdom requires critical reflection. Indeed a strong case can be made that key ideas of such conservative thinkers as Edmund Burke, Michael Oakeshott, and William Morris represent the outcome of critical thinking. Burke's Reflections on the Revolution in France (1790) was first a critique of the idea that social reforms should be based on the abstract theories of intellectuals who had no knowledge of local customs and who took no responsibility for the unanticipated consequences of implementing their abstract ideas. Other aspects of Burke's thinking were influenced by the aristocratic mind-set of his era—which critical reflection can easily identify and thus reject. There are other aspects of Burke's conservatism that represent political wisdom of the highest order—political wisdom that has been practiced by many indigenous cultures long before Burke committed his ideas to paper.

As the French revolution involved radical change, many of Burke's insights address what he regarded as the proper balance between historical continuities and change. Perhaps the most important insight, one that has special relevance in today's world of seemingly unrestrained market liberal and Christian fundamentalist attacks on our civic commons, is that, as Burke put it, "our liberties, as an entailed inheritance derived from our forefathers, (are) to be transmitted to our posterity" (1962 edition, p. 52). He restates this key conservative insight about intergenerational responsibility as "a partnership not only between those who are living, but also between those who are dead, and those that are to be born" (p. 140).

A second insight that rises to the level of wisdom and, in this case, universal relevance in these environmentally and change oriented times, was put this way: "A state without the means of some change is without the means of its conservation" (p. 37). Both insights, as well as his warning that the change should not be based on the assumption that it will lead to progress but should instead be assessed in terms of whether it makes a genuine contribution to the life of the community, make critical reflection or, as I argue, mindfulness about what needs to be conserved the key feature of what conservatism

should mean today. Later I will take up the question of whether mindful conservatives have a more legitimate claim to recent social justice achievements than do the social justice liberals.

In making the case that many of the ideas of philosophical conservatives have special relevance today, it is important to remember that mindfulness is needed in judging whether the ideas of past and present self-identified conservative thinkers contribute to conserving natural systems as well to conserving the aspects of the cultural commons that represent sources of resistance to the spread of market capitalism. Past conservative thinkers such as John Randolph and John C. Calhoun framed the conservative agenda as that of protecting the traditions of slavery and the right of states to perpetuate that institution. There are other conservative thinkers who start with the premise that humans are basically sinful, and have made this assumption the basis of their approach to educational reform and to urging government to impose more restrictions on peoples' freedoms. The growing awareness of the rate and scale of the environmental crises that the world now faces has led to the emergence of new conservative voices. The writings of Wendell Berry, Vandana Shiva, Wes Jackson, and Gary Snyder, among others, are representative of the environmental conservatives who are drawing attention to the importance of being rooted in place and community, of protecting indigenous knowledge from being patented and integrated into the market system, and of learning from nature how to practice agriculture on a long-term sustainable basis.

There are other conservative thinkers who challenged the Enlightenment assumptions of many scientists, technologists, and proponents of further rationalizing the industrial system of production in ways that reduce costs and maximize profits. Michael Oakeshott's Rationalism in Politics (1962) presents a powerful critique of how this combination of rationally based and market oriented technologies undermine the traditions of craft knowledge. Earlier William Morris helped to initiate the arts and craft movement in England, which later spread to America. Morris combined a refined aesthetic judgment with a love of nature. He also emphasized the importance of craft knowledge and skill as important alternatives to the de-skilling characteristics of the industrial system. The American Shakers represent yet another example of how

conservatism may combine the refinement of traditions of craft knowledge with useful innovations.

Conservative writers have also had a profound influence on our system of government, which may surprise many social justice liberals who assume, along with George Lakoff, that the conservatives are the greatest threat to our civil liberties. James Madison, along with other Federalists, translated conservative insights about past abuses of people's civil rights in a way that led to a system of government based on checks and balances, that included an independent judiciary, as well as the separation of church and state. One of the purposes of the Constitution was to provide safeguards against the loss of basic freedoms essential in a democratic society, and these safeguards were designed to make changing them difficult. That is, their efforts were directed toward institutionalizing (conserving) what had been learned from the religious wars that had earlier ravaged across Europe, and from the unlimited power of kings and other forms of authoritarian governments. As one of the characteristics of conservatives who have in the past, and who are now addressing today's forms of extremism, is that their thinking reflects Burke's emphasis on mindfulness about which achievements of the past need to be improved upon in order to ensure that the prospects of future generations are not diminished. They also are reliant on a historical perspective that enables them to avoid repeating the mistakes and abuses of the past.

We should not take seriously all philosophical conservatives. It has only been in the last forty or so years that one of the major limitations in the thinking of philosophical conservatives has been addressed by environmentalists and the proponents of the cultural commons. Their contribution was to explain how conserving the non-monetized traditions of communities rooted in place would reduce the human impact on the environment. What we should be taking seriously is the conservative wisdom about the dangers of the media culture and our educational institutions—both of which promote a form of individualism that is lacking in mindfulness about which traditions should be carried forward. This cult of individualism not only serves the interests of the industrial, consumer-oriented culture but is also a threat to what remains of our democratic traditions. The need to acquire the latest digital technologies and the constant quest to find life entertaining have resulted in a state of mind where our current slide down the

slippery political slope leading to an authoritarian system of government goes largely unnoticed.

Where we are on this slippery slope can be assessed by how widespread the following practices are accepted by a near majority of the public: the widespread use of surveillance technologies by the government, the use of fear in order to foster a hyper-state of patriotism, the practice of rendition, over 800 Presidential signings that allow the president to void aspects of legislation that do not fit with his ideology, the increasing alliance between corporations and the government that spreads misinformation about the nature of the ecological crises, and the weakening of the system of checks and balances—with a similar weakening of the separation between church and state. Even when the corporate controlled media provides limited coverage of any of the above changes in our political situation, it fails to divert attention from the pursuit of self-interest—which is increasingly focused on issues related to living in a consumer dominated culture.

Awareness of the drive to bring more aspects of daily life, from human reproduction to replacing household tasks with commodities and machines—and even to different states of consciousness that can be manipulated by drugs (the market for implanting computer chips in the brain is still in its infancy), should lead to taking seriously the wisdom of different conservatives whose writings expressed a deep concern about the loss of craft knowledge, the mutual support systems within communities, and the growing sense of rootlessness. Their concerns should not be dismissed as either reactionary or as nostalgia for the simpler life of the past. There are real dangers ahead for people who rely increasingly upon a money economy. Even though the source of these dangers are reported in the media, most people seem unable to recognize that they are not immune from the economic impact of corporate outsourcing, downsizing, increased reliance on automation, and the breaking of the social contract that in the past paid for medical coverage and a pension in exchange for a lifetime of work. One of the ironies today is while public schools and universities reinforce the deep cultural assumptions that the continued expansion of the industrial, consumer-oriented culture is dependent upon, the forms of knowledge and values that would enable people to be less reliant upon a money economy are largely relegated to low status and thus omitted from the curriculum. This double bind highlights the fundamental difference between the

cultural assumptions promoted by both market and social justice liberals, and those promoted by conservatives who are now writing about the cultural and environmental commons.

The word “commons” does not fit with either the market or social justice liberal’s vocabularies that frame how the content of different academic disciplines is to be understood. Thus, it is a word that has little or no meaning to most university graduates—and, sadly, to most faculty. Yet it is the word that refers both to one of the most ancient traditions of humans and to current cultural practices that are as broad and complex as the word tradition. It is a key word that should be part of the vocabulary of genuine conservatives who are concerned about the ecological crises and the need to move toward a non-colonizing post-industrial culture. A few science faculty are more likely to be aware of Garrett Hardin’s essay on the “Tragedy of the Commons” but this essay has had the unfortunate effect of reinforcing a limited understanding of the commons. It has also helped to perpetuate a basic misconception; namely, that all cultures are driven by a possessive form of individualism. Hardin’s ethnocentrism, in effect, reinforces the ethnocentrism of most of his readers.

In recovering the fuller meaning of the commons, it is necessary to recognize that its explanatory power requires recognizing that both the cultural and environmental commons can be understood separately, as well as how they relate to each other. It is also necessary to avoid the ethnocentrism that might lead the reader to assume that there is a universal cultural and environmental commons. While reading about the cultural and environmental commons of mainstream American society, it is necessary to keep in mind that the different cultural groups within our society, as well as the non-Western cultures, have their own traditions that can be referred to as the cultural and environmental commons. It is also necessary to keep in mind that the abstract and reductionist nature of the printed word fails to convey the complexity of the face-to-face, intergenerationally connected ways that different aspects of the community’s cultural and environment are experienced.

From the beginning of human history the cultural and environmental commons represented what was shared by members of the community on a non-monetized basis. Romanticizing both aspects of the commons can be avoided if it is kept in

mind that differences in status systems, as well as in political and economic power, often influenced who had the most access and who was excluded. But this basic definition still stands even though many aspects of today's cultural and environmental commons, as practiced in mainstream society, may require a small degree of dependence upon a money economy. Another characteristic of all cultural and environmental commons, though expressed differently by cultures, is that they are dependent upon intergenerational knowledge, skills, patterns of moral reciprocity, and local decision making. Included in the cultural commons of most cultures are the following: the language that reproduces the culture's patterns of thinking and values, narratives and ceremonies, knowledge of gathering and growing food--along with how to prepare and share it with others, healing practices, creative forms of expression, craft knowledge, games and different forms of entertainment, locally adapted technologies, spiritual values, traditions of civic participation—including, in terms of Western cultures, the traditions of civil liberties. The environmental commons includes water, air, absence of industrial sounds and smells, soils, weather patterns, rocks, species, habitats, fish in the rivers and oceans, micro-organisms, and so forth. In short, all aspects of the natural environment that were and still are available to members of the community on a non-monetized basis—which are becoming fewer and fewer.

There is another characteristic of the world's diverse cultural and environmental commons, and that is how the largely non-monetized aspects of daily life are rapidly being “enclosed”. This word refers to the process of privatization by individuals and corporations that exclude access except on a monetized basis. To make this point in a different way, enclosure involves transforming the intergenerational and mutually supporting practices within the community into monetized relationships and commodities. It also involves the loss of local decision making while increasing dependence upon the uncertainties of a money economy and the disruptive impact of new technologies. Enclosure now takes many forms. Along with the age-old status systems that excluded certain groups from sharing in different aspects of the commons, more recent forms of enclosure can be seen in the patenting of the gene lines of plants and animals, increasing ownership of the airwaves by media corporations, replacement of craft knowledge and skill with automated machines, individual privacy by surveillance

technologies that transform data into a commodity purchased by corporations, the spoken narratives by printed texts stored in a data base, face-to-face relationships by computer mediated communication –which requires an unending series of technological upgrades, and so forth.

Enclosure is also taking place as the educational system, the media, and adults contribute to the cultural amnesia that is heavily reinforced by the need to create a mind-set that is oriented toward the new products and monetized services that encroach further on what remains of the cultural and environmental commons. Stories of how our traditions of civil liberties were gained, and the arguments about what was to be achieved by basing these liberties in a written constitution were and, among certain segments of society, still are part of the cultural commons. When these stories are not passed on to the next generation an important form of enclosure occurs. That is, as these civil rights are undermined, the people who have not been exposed to the collective memory passed on through the stories will not be aware that something extremely important is being taken from them. When we consider other stories--of the labor, feminist, and civil rights movements, the efforts of the indigenous cultures to resist being herded onto reservations and to conserve what remained of their cultural traditions, the peace movements, and the stories of the efforts of other groups working to rectify the injustices being done to others, we can see a similar process of enclosure where what was previously shared and served as a collective moral compass of how to live is being lost. What is lost then becomes a state of silence, a lack of memory, and an inability to find the language that rescues these traditions through the act of naming. And if the form of enclosure or injustice cannot be named, it is less likely to be resisted.

The forces behind other forms of enclosure, such as the many voices and interests that reflect the market liberal quest for total ownership of both the cultural and environmental commons, rush in with the language and ideologically driven interpretative frameworks that prevent people from recognizing what has been lost. In not being aware of how the intergenerational stories of past achievements were sources of community and individual self-sufficiency, it becomes more difficult to recognize how the loss of skills and mutual support systems within the community increases dependence upon a money economy. And resistance to what is taken-for-granted seldom occurs. If

it does, there is generally little support from others who find security in their taken-for-granted world. An example of how market and technological forces are enclosing the language that is central to interdependent and morally coherent communities can be seen in how the words “wisdom” and “elders” have been replaced by “data” and “experts”. Few voices have been raised against the loss of this part of the vocabulary of mainstream culture. When we take into consideration the diversity of the world’s cultural and environmental commons, we can begin to understand the scale of enclosure of the languages of other cultures as the market economy is being globalized.

The usual response I encounter when giving talks at universities on the nature and importance of educational reforms that contribute to the revitalization of the cultural and environmental commons usually is expressed in two ways: either “we cannot go back” or “you are romanticizing a lifestyle that was hard and precarious.” It’s as predictable and formulaic as the misuse of our political language. In spite of this widespread ignorance, daily life in communities across North America still depends upon many aspects of the cultural commons that are largely taken for granted. This includes the language that introduces the infant into the culture’s ways of thinking and understanding of moral relationships . The local cultural commons also includes knowledge of which side of the road to drive on, of how to read and to spell correctly (reliance on computers are enclosing the latter), of preparing a meal for family members, of how to use the patterns of meta-communication in ways understood by others (computers are also contributing to its enclosure), of how to play chess and other games, of basic rights to privacy and civil liberties (with both now under pressure of enclosure), and so forth. Dependence upon these and other aspects of the cultural commons not listed here are largely taken for granted.

In most communities, however, there are people with a heightened awareness of the intergenerational knowledge and skills they rely upon to give their lives a deeper sense of meaning and to provide mutual support, even as mentors, for others. These are the people who are master gardeners, weavers, potters, poets, writers, glass makers, sculptors, story tellers, crafts people who work in wood and metal, organic farmers, visual artists, people who care for animals both domestic and wild. The list could be extended further by doing a survey of the people in the local community who are

consciously carrying forward the knowledge and skills learned from previous generations—and who are consciously helping to ensure that their largely non-monetized skills and knowledge are passed on to future generations. What is surprising is that most academics who are aware of many of these people, as well as the importance of their skills, are unable to acknowledge that these daily practices of renewing the commons justify engaging students in a discussion of what needs to be conserved.

There is usually a member or two in the community, older and less inclined to go with the what Friedrich Nietzsche referred to as the “herd mentality, who show up at town meetings and write letters to the editor reminding the public of how the politicians and corporations are exploiting both the people and the land—as well as putting the people’s civil rights further at risk. This type of person is often the keeper of the moral commons; but there are others, more reactionary in terms of maintaining unjust traditions, who will also be speaking out. These people, who are also carrying forward the intergenerational traditions that promote special privileges and exploitive practices, help to make the case for being explicitly aware of the different traditions that can be referred to as the cultural commons. Being explicitly aware, which includes being able to name and thus give expression both to specific examples of the cultural commons and to whether they contribute to an ecologically sustainable future and to a community based on moral reciprocity, is absolutely essential. Recognizing the differences between the moral commons promoted by different religious traditions is also important, especially now that America seems to be going through yet another revival of millennial extremism. But this time the fundamentalist followers of a literalist interpretation of when the end of time will arrive are not selling their possessions and looking skyward. Rather, they are working to take control of the government and to supporting the corporations that are devastating the environment—which they take to be yet another sign of progress toward the time of Armageddon that will separate the saved from the rest of us.

When we take account of the connections between the importance of conserving the world’s languages, the diversity of what remains of the cultural and environmental commons, the increasing threat to our civil liberties and democratic institutions that also need to be understood as part of the commons, it becomes increasingly difficult to ignore that the language of mindful conservatism, rather than the language either of market or

social justice liberalism, is more suited to making the transition to a post-industrial culture. Social justice liberals are often insightful observers of a wide variety of injustices, and they are generally people of good will. But their taken-for-granted assumptions about the autonomous individual, the inherently progressive nature of change, the ethnocentrism that leads them to promote colonizing other cultures with the Western way of understanding democracy, freedom, and other Enlightenment assumptions, make them poor guardians of the world's diversity of the cultural and environmental commons.

Social justice liberals are likely to protest the suggestion that these times require a mindful conservative political discourse. While they are also concerned about the degraded state of our civil liberties and the injustices promoted by the current collusion between the market liberals in the White house, Congress, the Supreme Court, and the corporations, they still have trouble with the word “traditions.” Even though our civil liberties and democratic institutions are expressions of traditions, and that the non-monetized aspects of the cultural and environmental commons are examples of traditions, social justice liberals continue to think in the same formulaic manner as George Lakoff. For them traditions still are the major obstacles to progress, which is a word that serves as their talisman. They also are likely to claim that the language of liberalism has been in the past and is currently more appropriate in terms of making further gains in social justice. What this claim overlooks is that their understanding of conservatism is based on the misconceptions of earlier academics, journalists, and others who have exerted control over our symbolic world. As social and ecojustice issues will remain a major concern far into the future, it is important that the misconceptions that have become part of the formulaic thinking surrounding the use of conservatism be addressed directly.

The mind-set that views change as the expression of progress is likely to think of the social justice achievements as protecting and expanding the rights of workers, women, and minority groups as the overturning of traditions of exploitation and ignorance. They are partly correct, if we assume that this narrow interpretation of tradition is all there is to what the word encompasses. If we become more thoughtful about the short and long-term consequences of the various expressions of progress—by technologists and scientists engaged in genetic engineering, by corporations that come up

with new ways to ease the immediate burden (but not the danger) of piling up massive debt, by new strategies for outsourcing and downsizing both the need for workers and the size of their pensions, by identifying new human ailments that require the latest drugs, by market liberals and Christian fundamentalists in overturning traditions that still stand in the way of a system of government that combines the characteristics of fascism and a Christian theocracy—perhaps then the word “conserving” would seem more helpful in drawing attention to the traditions that are now being threatened.

I would like to go beyond these suggestions, which seems common sense, to make a different claim. Even though social justice liberals have claimed in the name of progress the gains in overturning different forms of exploitation and marginalization, what they were doing was carrying forward the earlier traditions of struggling against exploitation and abuse. What generally goes unrecognized is that these traditions of exploitation—the ruthless exploitation of coal miners and today’s migrant farm and meat industry workers, of women and children working on the first assembly lines in the English Midlands and in today’s modern sweat shops, of people not seen as “normal” caught in the supposed progressive thinking of doctors practicing eugenics, and so forth—were for the most part based on liberal assumptions about progress in manufacturing and expanding markets, in health care, in achieving greater profits. Challenging these traditions, which were and continue to be based on the anti-tradition traditions that promote progress, meant building on the social justice traditions that go way back in the history of the West. The problem that continues is that the word ‘tradition’ is still largely understood by social justice liberals in terms of the traditions that should not have been established in the first place-- as Shils points out,

Mindful conservatism, as discussed earlier, requires a more complex understanding of traditions—including Shils’ observation that when traditions are lost they cannot be recovered. Thus, his warning is to be cautious about embracing changes just because they are assumed to represent progress. Burke’s warnings also come to mind. If mindful conservatism is guided by two basic criteria—namely, that reforms must contribute to more ecologically sustainable cultures, and that they must reduce poverty and other forms of injustice, then a stronger case can be made that it is better suited to resisting the different forms of enclosure that are now the chief sources of

poverty, destruction of the environment, and the threat to the prospects of future generations. It would not be incorrect to say that the progressive orientation both of market and social justice liberals (albeit for achieving different agendas) has contributed to educational reforms that have enclosed the language essential to articulating the nature and importance of the cultural commons.

Given the widespread misuse of liberalism and conservatism, it will be difficult to rectify how to use these terms in a more historically accurate and currently accountable way. Explaining the complexity of mindful conservatism, and why it is a better suited for holding accountable politicians and others who gain from using words that represent the opposite of both their historical and current meaning, is difficult—particularly in conversations where people resist long explanations. Their patience is further tested when the in-depth explanation has the effect of highlighting just how uneducated they are. A starting place in rectifying our use of liberalism and conservatism would be for people who identify themselves as liberal and progressive thinkers to use the phrase “social justice liberal” instead of the more ambiguous “liberal.” As “progressive” and “progress” are context free metaphors that every social group can claim, from corporations and market liberal and Christian fundamentalists to libertarians and social justice liberals, I suggest that it be used sparingly—and always accompanied by an explanation of progress toward some social or environmental end. But even this can be confusing. What social justice liberals can do to facilitate the transition to an accountable political discourse is to use the word “conserve” in contexts where it is appropriate. An example would be for Lakoff to refer to conserving the environment and our civil liberties instead of categorizing both efforts under the rubric of progressive. In short, when social justice liberals are attempting to strengthen various social justice traditions, in the areas of labor, civil rights, reducing poverty, and resisting the dismantling of our democratic system of government, they should use the word tradition in ways that suggest its complexity and, in many instances, its need of safeguards, renewal, and transformation.

As social justice liberals begin to inch their way from the misconceptions of Enlightenment thinkers, including those of Descartes, Locke and the recent empiricists who share the idea that humans that can live without traditions, the people who are the

genuine conservatives need to recognize that they also have some linguistic repair work to do. First, they should continually raise the question, in conversations with others and in their writings and public talks, about what the market liberal and Christian fundamentalists want to conserve. This question needs to be asked in so many venues that it becomes a habit of mind. When an environmentalist, and the person who is working to renew different aspects of the cultural commons—including the traditions that our civil rights are based upon, they need to avoid simply identifying their position as conservative. They need to add a statement that makes explicit what they are working to conserve. The rule is that the words “conserve” and “conservatism” should not be used in a way that is open to misinterpretation, as most social justice liberals have been indoctrinated to equate conservatism with corporations and right wing religious groups. The feminists demonstrated that it is possible to change the misconceptions encoded in our language, and that as the language began to change, more people began to recognize the possibility of new relationships and responsibilities. Hopefully, it will not take the activists working to renew the cultural and environmental commons the many decades that it took the feminists to begin the process of linguistic/cultural transformation—as the rate of global warming and its accompanying environmental changes may not allow us a similar time frame.

The double bind will continue even if thoughtful citizens take seriously the above suggestions for rectifying the use of our political vocabulary, as public schools and universities are likely to continue to reinforce the current Orwellian political discourse-- as well as maintaining their silence about the importance of the cultural and environmental commons. Public schools and universities played an important role in challenging the gender bias encoded in the public discourse and discriminatory daily practices. However, it may be more difficult to win the cooperation of professors and public school teachers as it is unlikely that the courts will hold people and corporations accountable for enclosing the commons and for how different political groups misrepresent themselves. The feminists, after long years of struggle, had the courts on their side, which forced universities and public schools to monitor whether their language and practices were discriminatory.

If professors and public schools teachers are to contribute to the transition to a post industrial, more cultural and environmental commons-centered future, they will have to initiate a number of reforms that go well beyond “greening” the campus buildings. There are a number of concepts that will need to be introduced across a range of courses and disciplines. These include a more complex and culturally informed understanding of the nature of tradition, as well as a greater awareness of how the content of so many disciplines, from philosophy, economics, sociology, psychology, and the sciences to professional schools such as business and education, are based on the ethnocentric thinking of the men and women who laid the conceptual foundations of the discipline. The nature both of the local cultural and environmental commons, as well as the world’s diversity of the commons, also need to be given a more central focus in many disciplines— which hopefully will influence what is learned about the commons in public schools.

Helping students learn about the diversity of the world’s cultural and environmental commons, and why resistance to their further enclosure by market and other colonizing forces, is critical to living on an ecologically sustainable planet is perhaps one of the most important educational reforms that needs to be undertaken. Learning about the nature, complexity, and ecological significance of renewing what remains of the commons will require introducing students to an in-depth understanding of their own culture, as well as the commons of other cultures. The focus on making the cultural and environmental commons the focus of learning is profoundly different from the current approach in public schools to multiculturalism— which has a more liberal ideological focus on treating people as equal and deserving of respect. This well-intentioned approach continues the silence about the nature and extent of the ecological crises, and the role that renewing the commons might play in slowing the rate of environmental degradation.

If local democracy, which is a feature of the cultural commons of many cultures, is to be strengthened, students both at the public school and university level will need to recognize the intergenerational traditions that are still carried on in their communities, as well as in the communities of different cultures. They will also need to learn how to discriminate between the traditions that enhance moral reciprocity, mutual support within

the community, and have a smaller ecological impact, and the traditions that were wrongly constituted in the first place. An equally important challenge will be to provide the students with the language and conceptual frameworks that enable them to recognize how the different forms of enclosure and the ideologies and belief systems that promote enclosure are being wrongly represented as a manifestation of progress. The number of Americans that were shown by a recent opinion survey to lack a knowledge of the three branches of government, as well as knowledge of the individual rights protected by the Constitution, suggests that the task of helping to restore local democracy by educating people to make informed decisions about which forms of enclosure should be resisted will be a monumental challenge. But the nature of the environmental changes that are now taking place on a global basis makes it necessary to wake up—and to take on the challenge of revitalizing local democratic decision making, even as the corporate media continues to transform consumerism into a popular religion.

University courses ranging from economics, history, political science, philosophy, the sciences and fine arts, all need to make the issues related the cultural and environmental commons a more central focus of learning. For example, students taking philosophy courses need to go beyond the tired debates between different philosophers about the nature of knowledge and moral values to consider the broader implications of their ethnocentrism, and how their ethnocentrism has contributed both to the past and present embrace by faculty of both the nineteenth century social Darwinian and its current reincarnated interpretation of cultural development which represents the West as more culturally advanced. Philosophy students should also be encouraged to consider how different philosophers, from Plato, Locke, Descartes, to Dewey and Richard Rorty, have contributed to the misunderstandings that have marginalized an awareness of the different forms of knowledge that sustain the commons. The differences between the economic practices within viable commons of different cultures and those within the capitalist system of mass production and consumption, as well as the latter's influence on creating greater poverty and vulnerability to changes in environmental systems, also needs to be studied. A different set of issues should be the focus of political science and even courses in the fine arts where the distinction between folk or vernacular (which has not been monetized) and the connections between the high-status arts and the rise of

capitalism are examined. There are hopeful signs that some courses in business are beginning to introduce students to the spread of micro-businesses that are more community centered, but they are on the extreme fringe of what is the main focus of the various business courses-- which is to promote hyper-consumerism on a global basis.

The current emphasis within the field of teacher education of indoctrinating students with the idea that they can construct their own knowledge and thus attain autonomy from the constraints of traditions should be a source of deep concern. At the level of classroom practice, the market liberal priority of educating students for the workplace in the 21st Century, as they like to represent their environmentally and commons destructive agenda, is being reinforced through a system of economic rewards and punishments by the federal government. While social justice oriented churches and even some businesses are working to reduce the adverse impact of human practices on the environment, the field of teacher education continues to be a wasteland—as an earlier critic described it. Perhaps a more accurate representation would be to say that the different reform efforts in teacher education continue the silence about the cultural roots of the ecological crises, and the silence about the importance of knowing how to participate in the revitalization of the cultural and environmental commons. Separating environmental education from the rest of the curriculum, and entrusting it to teachers who are primarily trained to approach environmental issues from the limited perspective of the sciences, reinforces two messages that few students are able to question. The first is that science and technology should be looked to for solving the environmental crisis, and the second is that living by current cultural assumptions and practices, which few science-trained environmental educators are able to question, will continue to ensure social progress.

One of the chief limitations of liberalism is that it is used to justify that each faculty member's personal interests should prevail in determining the focus of their teaching and writing (as long as it does not violate the parameters of consensus within the discipline). This emphasis on the pursuit of individual self-interest makes it difficult to discuss and agree on what are the common threats to our society and the world generally, A possible first step in overcoming this powerful relativizing influence would be to set up a department of cultural and environmental commons studies. This, of course, will likely

be interpreted by faculty in other disciplines as relieving them of responsibility—thus allowing them to continue to reinforce the taken-for-granted cultural assumptions that are learned in public schools and that underlie the industrial/consumer culture. However, if the courses developed within this new department were rigorous in raising critical questions about the different cultural forces that are contributing to the enclosure of the cultural and environmental commons, as well as enabling students to recognize the different scenarios that may become the basis of daily life if the destruction of the commons continues, the pressure from students might eventually force faculty in other disciplines to take both the commons and the ecological crises seriously. When the feminists achieved a critical mass of support, and students became aware of gender bias in their courses, they challenged their professors—which led in many instances to professors being more aware of their otherwise taken-for-granted patterns of gender bias in how they controlled classroom discourse and in their writing. Creating a department that focuses on the study of the commons is a weak reed to rely upon, given the growing control of the corporate media, and the widespread complicity of well-intentioned journalists and other shapers of public opinion in furthering the Orwellian political discourse. However, it represents a starting place, just as it is a starting place when we use in daily conversation the political language in ways that more accurately represent what needs to be conserved and what needs to be reformed.

C. A.(Chet) Bowers is the author of 19 books that examine the cultural roots of the ecological crises, including the role that public schools and universities have played in perpetuating the cultural assumptions that continue to give conceptual direction and moral legitimacy to the industrial/consumer dependent culture that is deepening the ecological crises. He has been invited to speak at 34 foreign universities, and 37 in the United States. His website can be reached at <http://cabowers.net/>.

