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Book Reviews

Willam A. Sodeman

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roughly what I had in mind. Wood put it much more clearly. I thank her for that point of criticism.

5. Mike and Chris refer to fictitious persons.

6. This particular stakeholder politics is based on rights to which Donaldson and Preston appeal in their normative approach.

7. One way to carry further the critique that I sketched here is to read corporate reengineering from the standpoint of consent and exit conditions, two ethical principles that Donaldson and Dunfee (1994) propose in their integrated social contracts theory.

8. This barrier is another way of describing the separation principle that Freeman challenges and defeats.

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Paul Hawken, *The Ecology of Commerce: A Declaration of Sustainability*. New York: Harper Business, 1993. 250 pages. \$23.00

Paul Hawken's 1983 book, *The Next Economy*, was an eloquent statement of his views regarding economic growth and personal choice. In some ways, the book was almost prophetic. One section contains a letter written by Hawken to a college student. Several years before the phrase "Generation X" was coined, Hawken eloquently discussed the many problems that this demographic segment has come to face in recent years, including the increasing burden of entitlements in the United States and the overall declining growth of the world economy.

In the years since that book's publication, Hawken's attention has focused on issues concerning the natural environment. The premise of his latest book, *The Ecology of Commerce*, is simple: Consumers and businesses must make fundamental changes in their expectations and activities for the planet to survive. His presentation and discussion are stimulating yet incomplete, especially when examined from the perspective of business and society scholarship. Given Hawken's penchant for prophecy, his observations and proposed solutions deserve attention.

Reading this book was both a demoralizing and an uplifting experience. One particularly troubling theme that runs through the book is the level of environmental damage that has been done in the United States. The reader is confronted with a continuing parade of examples from business practice. Some of the most notorious incidents, including the Exxon Valdez oil spill, will be familiar to most readers. Other concepts, including the effects of chlorine-based chemical compounds on animals and human beings, build upon the work of other authors and scientists. The impressive amount of information presented provides a clear argument that the dominance of market forces and the restoration of the natural environment have little in common.

Hawken's purpose is not to destroy the reader's hopes of a better future but to challenge readers to take steps toward securing that better future. The changes he envisions must be initiated by consumers, not the companies that provide the consumables. Even the current crop of socially responsible businesses cannot solve the larger problems created by our current economic system:

If every company on the planet were to adopt the best environmental practices of the leading companies—say, the Body Shop, Patagonia, and 3M—the world would still be moving toward sure degradation and economic collapse. So if a tiny fraction of the world's most intelligent managers cannot model a sustainable world, then environmentalism as currently practiced by business today, laudable as it may be, is only a part of the overall solution. Rather than a management problem, we have a design problem, a flaw that runs all through business. (p. xiii)

Business and society professors have come to rely on these companies as positive examples of business practice. The social benefits that such companies can produce can easily be undone by their geographic scope. In Hawken's vision of a restorative economy, consumers would seek out producers in highly localized markets, encouraged by Pigouvian taxes that force companies to include environmental costs in the prices charged to consumers.

Sustainability is an “economic golden rule for the restorative economy; Leave the world better than you found it, take no more than you need, try not to harm life or the environment, make amends if you do” (p. 139). The latter part sounds almost naive when applied to current business trends. In the United States, companies display the “chasing arrow” logo on labels, catalogs, and advertisements, implying that their actions require a response from consumers. In the past few years, more companies have disclosed the amount of recycled material that was actually collected by consumers. Even this journal is printed on recycled paper, which is ironic when one considers that any original copy has been effectively pulled out of the recycling chain, resting on a bookshelf in a library or office. It is a symbolic act that creates a demand for recycled goods but does nothing to restore the forests from which the paper fibers are grown. The German *grüne Punkt* program is a notable exception to this (Arnold & Long, 1994).

Restoration is a skill that the average American seems loathe to acquire. Fast food, for example, is convenient and, in its own way, comforting. The ingredients of a Big Mac or a Whopper sandwich never vary. The tastes of the sandwiches, side orders, and drinks are carefully designed and controlled. The customer approaches the counter, orders, eats, tosses the waste into a convenient spot, and moves on to the next destination. Fast food is a movable feast, as long as one is willing to substantially revise the definition of a feast (Ritzer, 1992).

A great deal of energy and infrastructure is required to grow the raw materials, process them in a central location, and transport the products in a state that allows quick preparation. Americans have created a massive industry dedicated to the production, marketing, and convenient availability of hot snacks. Breakfast, lunch, and dinner are deconstructed and replaced with the value meal. Food courts replaced the drive-in, which replaced the coffee shop, which in turn replaced the cafeteria (Langdon, 1986). Fast food is a status symbol, flaunting the idea that our society can afford staggering levels of convenience.

Restoration, on the other hand, is relatively inconvenient and time-consuming. In 1993, 400,000 residents of Milwaukee were sickened by tainted drinking water during the largest cryptosporidium outbreak ever recorded in the United States. Speculation as to the source has centered on a variety of possibilities, including meat-processing plants that produce beef and pork products and may have discharged untreated waste into the city’s water supply.

The following year, there were persistent concerns about the city’s water despite substantial investments in the city’s treatment plants and the completion of a massive underground storage facility for untreated sew-

age. Individual citizens felt they could do little besides buy home filtration systems and bottled water. Reductions in meat production and consumption were never seriously considered as a solution to Milwaukee's problems, in part because the solution is so contrary to the tenets of the American consumer culture that it is difficult to seriously consider.

The fast food industry is but one example of how the consumer ethic is difficult to sustain. Restoration of the natural environment would require Americans to sacrifice convenience and comfort, ideals they have come to cherish as much or more than their constitutional rights. Hawken is, like other critics of the consumer ethic, asking consumers to question their role in society.

The uplifting moments in this book are the result of Hawken's business experience. He provides a sense of relevance and pragmatism that often eludes both academics and practitioners. His words carry substance and sincerity, especially when compared to the ghost-written memoirs and autobiographies of more famous executives like Lee Iacocca and John Sculley. Hawken is a man who genuinely cares about the ideas he expresses and who wants the reader to learn with him rather than follow his example or admire him. From this standpoint, *The Ecology of Commerce* would make an excellent supplementary text for elective courses on business and society, management, and economics courses.

Managers who are not dissuaded by Hawken's strong opinions and derision of Republican party politics will find an abundance of valuable ideas and information. One of the best examples is the revelation that during the 1920s, Henry Ford developed an automobile made of soybean-based plastic, goldenrod-derived rubber tires, and powered by ethanol (pp. 67-68). Ford merely wished to create competitive advantage based upon the agricultural strengths that America has in abundance.

In this and other anecdotes, Hawken wants to show that sound business strategies can be based upon careful examination of the natural environment. Stead and Stead, in the 1992 book *Management for a Small Planet*, arrived at a similar conclusion, couched in the theory and language of ecologically sustainable enterprise-level strategies. Hawken suggests that sustainability and restoration can be achieved, but only by altering the economic rules of the consumer society.

As we turn to the problem of sustaining the restorative economy, the conflict between enterprise-level strategy prescriptions and Hawken's economic incentives becomes an obstacle to change. The attainment of an ecologically sustainable economy requires a massive readjustment of expectations for all members of the industrialized world, and a fundamental shift in the values that business, government, and society regard as most

important. A sustainable and restorative economy might operate with a Rawlsian stakeholder strategy, in which the natural environment is regarded as the worst-off stakeholder whose condition must be improved.

The best feature in this book is the opportunity it provides for a thorough examination of the assumptions that pervade business education and the field of business and society in particular. There seems ample room for discussion of restoration and consumption as the engines of our society. The challenge of reconciling the two in a sustainable manner is highly compatible with the concepts that we teach and research.

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—WILLIAM A. SODEMAN
University of Southern Indiana

I. I. Mitroff and H. A. Linstone, *The Unbounded Mind: Breaking the Chains of Traditional Business Thinking*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1993. 171 pages. \$25.00.

Mitroff and Linstone state in the preface that their objective is to help students, workers, and executives engage in a new type of critical thinking. New thinking, they state, is essential for organizations to successfully master the challenges of life now and in the 21st century. Individuals must learn to critically examine problems from multiple perspectives, for the old ways of thinking are not rigorous enough to solve today's complex problems.

This book is an exercise in applied philosophy. Mitroff and Linstone introduce five epistemologies that they call inquiring systems. The authors