

The Loneliness of the Long Distance Runner

(Communicating your experiences)

As you delve ever more deeply into your chosen area of study, you inevitably leave behind the “territory” of the cliché, and begin to discern the borders of understanding. Yet, when you attempt to communicate your initial and clearly modest achievements, you find, at first surprisingly, and then disappointingly, that these seem to be unintelligible to everyone else.

To have committed yourself to this area of study, and find that you are no longer merely imbibing the thoughts of others, but beginning to make a contribution yourself, this had started to give you a measure of confidence, but the reactions of others also had undermined it to such an extent that you also start to doubt that what you are doing is worthwhile.

The oft believed idea that the Truth is remarkably simple, and when revealed will be easily intelligible by everyone, turns out to be a myth. What is, of course, embodied in such a myth, is our universally applied method of investigating things by initially walling off each one from everything else.

We **make** the subject of our studies simple, and so what we extract is also simple.

And any general world view necessarily generated from this is a Reality which is merely a complex of simple things. So, to elicit the expected understanding and consequent applause of others, you too have to conform to this agreed methodology and eclectic World View.

But, everything in this World isn't treatable by such means. Indeed, all the most important areas are certainly NOT!

So, if your extensive and long-winded efforts are in just such intractable regions of truth, you will invariably be met with distrust, or even active disbelief.

No matter how much care (and even pedagogy) you invest in explaining your contribution, you invariably detect in your auditors a strongly urgent **commitment elsewhere**, so you decide to shut up.

The trouble is that Reality is not poetically simple and immediately understandable at all. People forget that for over 99% of the history on earth of modern humans, people understood very little – their most advanced technology being “how to chip flint”.

But, in addition, it turns out that real Understanding cannot be solely the achievement of contributing individuals, but is essentially a social undertaking.

And this has two sides. The first is that particular form of Understanding which is termed **the consensus**.

This “agreed truth” is an odd phenomenon, because it may have aspects of truth within it, but they are **inherited** rather than **discovered**. They are also not **intrinsically** related to one another, but what can only be described as **simply** related. The consensus is the simplest collection of ideas – the most easily communicable rationalisation. And though the result is seemingly universal, it is not held by its constituency with any experientially acquired commitment or deep belief.

Its main advantage is that it is in a loose agreement with everybody else, and hence each and every subscriber can comfortably find that they are at one with their group.

If, for some reason, the consensus changes (as it inevitably does), then the majority will change with it, adroitly re-adapting to deliver all the required appropriate responses, and therefore be seen as a full-paying member. (membership is remarkably economic, as you see)

In my youth at University, everyone was a socialist.

It didn't really matter what your background was – rich or poor, brilliant or dumb, they all joined the consensus and demonstrated with everybody else. But years passed and they all changed. Their socialism was not a commitment, it was merely a subscribing to the then current fashion - the generally agreed position, and the easiest way to get by without any hassle, it was easier and more enjoyable to march with the throng.

The other side of the social nature to such consensus positioning, was that even when some people were certainly more serious about the positions involved, individually they rarely found their paths to truth **by themselves**. Even when they arrived at the position by thought and argument, they would be inevitably

determined on that trajectory by their awareness of being much too ill-informed to be able to individually integrate their ideas into a reasonably coherent World View.

Hence, they unavoidably had to depend on the collective positions defined by a like-thinking group.

These would certainly tend to have a real commitment, but it would be largely *second hand*. They didn't mine their most precious "nuggets" of understanding by their own efforts, but invariably took them on ready-made from the Group.

Now, you could also call this a consensus, but it was nowhere near as lightweight and disposable as the general version outlined earlier. It was, most certainly, a co-operative effort, and morsels will have been contributed by many (mostly previous) participants, and will have been integrated sufficiently by the groups dynamics and discussions to end up as reasonably coherent views of the World.

But, even here, any thinker well in the van of developing ideas, would unavoidably find himself devoid of a comprehending audience. If he had really done prodigious amounts of research and gradually unearthed new and profound ideas, that maybe generated some important questions about certain areas of the agreed consensus, then he would be distrusted rather than applauded. The advantages of "general agreement" can be undermined by innovation, and hence the reasons for his amendments, presumably being real, would often be much more difficult to integrate into the previous body of ideas, AND, would certainly require a great deal of effort by all concerned.

The required understanding could never be precipitated over a coffee, or even two!

It would need work by everybody, and that is rarely welcomed with open arms.

So, what does the serious and effective researcher do in such circumstances? He will have been greatly surprised at the lack of any appreciation of what is being revealed to the Group, and will have to look for individuals who he may be able to convert to his position.

Or he may simply back down, believing that the group must know a great deal more than he alone, and decide to shelve his contribution.

If he decides to look for, or even make, allies, he may be lucky. Such potential recruits may be available, but most frequently they are not, and our researcher, sure of his contribution, and disappointed by the negative reaction, may begin to wonder who he is doing this for!

It becomes a possible scenario that your significant contributions may end up stored in a box, which no-one will want to study, and which could easily never again see the light of day.

The usual conclusion of our innovators is to lay out all their work in some book or series of books and attempt, by this means, to find allies over a wider area. But, sadly, the majority of such "life-works" are never published. Someone in the future may find and appreciate your works, but that is, to say the least, highly unlikely. They are much more likely to be thrown away by uncomprehending heirs.

BUT, maybe there is a solution!

You could put your work on the Internet. This would cast your seeds world-wide, into seas which are regularly trawled by the Spiders of Google, and surfed by millions of "interested parties", some of whom whether in Scunthorpe or Kiev, or even Milan, may be looking for exactly what you are delivering.

So, to all you unappreciated workers who have something worthwhile to say, it is clear that you MUST invest in an internet based outlet, and feed the whole world through this tiny hole in the dyke of consensus. Go to it!

(1,287 words)