INTRINSIC SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Epistemes, Science, Business
and Sustainability

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Epistemes, Science, Business
and Sustainability

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Preface

This book started as a treatise about new and more sustainable forms of business. It first attempted this from inside the business world itself — as so many other books have done before. What is so very different about this book is that it reverses the approach; we stepped outside the business world, outside the social world, and into a world of realities now described by science. We finished with a book that looks at business, at our institutions and at ourselves from a world that is emerging around us as we write.

The new world that we describe has massive consequences for how we conduct business, the forms that our social institutions take and for ourselves, living quietly or noisily through day-to-day lives. This new world is a world of knowledge and it changes everything in the human sphere from global development policy down to our attitudes to nature, to other people and to our own selves.

Technically the book uses an analysis of epistemes, those unacknowledged ways in which we order knowledge. Michel Foucault became famous for his analyses of epistemes.

Our role as authors has not been to bring about or create a change of episteme but has been to observe, interpret and report. Foucault regarded himself as a kind of archeologist who unearthed past epistemes in European culture to reveal their ancient forms and consequences; we do the same kind of thing, but we have unearthed something Foucault could not have found. We have unearthed a sequel to the Modern episteme which did not exist during Foucault's lifetime.

This book is written within the emerging episteme. It does not use a Modern form of analysis: it is more like a novel. It describes things which have happened sequentially and holistically because

the emerging order of knowledge is historically dependent upon past events with all their uncertainties, complexities and diversities.

The result is a set of ideas with the potential to affect everyone. It is a book for anyone with an intellectual curiosity and a desire to help resolve the big problems that afflict our planet.

This book does not have all the answers. A new episteme sets a new agenda, a new ordering of knowledge and thought — just what this means in practice is something for us all to decide.

We invite readers to consider the fresh view of an ancient simplicity that this book provides; and then to apply this vision imaginatively, creatively and practically to our institutions and lives, for the betterment of all.

Summary of Contents

The book has twelve chapters arranged in four parts as follows.

Part I – Approach The four chapters of part I introduce the book's key ideas that weave through subsequent chapters. Some of these key ideas relate to our relations with nature, change and openness in societies, ancient China, science, innovation, business and entrepreneurs.

Part II – Modern Times It is in this part that the origins of the Modern episteme are examined both by using Foucault's method and by developing our own studies. Part II is not only of historical interest; the Modern episteme is still with us and we need to be aware of it so that we may follow its eclipse and recognize change as it happens.

Part III – Primal Knowledge This part presents evidence for the emerging episteme which we have called "Primal". Other part III chapters review the consequences of the Primal episteme for an informed and *wise* person as well as for *intrinsically* sustainable business.

Part IV – Consequences The single chapter of this part considers more consequences of a new episteme, in particular for those who support such a change and those who do not.

Finally, it is important to stress that a change of episteme is not prescriptive. It may be unavoidable, but it is also liberating - for those who know what is going on.

Acknowledgments

This book has benefitted from the assistance of a great many people from all quarters of the world and of life. We are indebted to them all.

In particular we would like to thank Ann Birkin who has always subscribed to the emerging episteme whether she knew it or not. We also thank Liu Zhen, Olga Wernemyr and Mike Norman for lending just a little of themselves to characters in this book.