

DINNER TALK

I have a dinner speech – I know that all of you who attended last year were longing to know whether there would be another one. There is.

At night, we get to dream a little and the relentless hammer of rigour, relevance and restitution that pounds at day can tap a little tune at night in praise of wine's delight and our fine company.

“Drink wine. This is life eternal. This is all that youth will give you. It is the season for wine, roses and drunken friends. Be happy for this moment. This moment is your life.”

— Omar Khayyam from the Rubaiyat.

Last year I established the tradition of a motivational speech that must reference a mystical source, however, next year...it must be someone else. No I'm not pointing at you Patrick Holden, I'm not, my finger is divining its own after-dusk dream of Patrick's provocative prose with mystical theme.

So the Rubaiyat is not the source for tonight, though it is mystical

“I sent my Soul through the Invisible,
Some letter of that After-life to spell:
And by and by my Soul return'd to me,
And answer'd: 'I Myself am Heav'n and Hell”

— Omar Khayyam from the Rubaiyat.

Tonight's inspiration is from our friends from the corporate world and their business initiative “redefining value”.

It can be so depressing to see how slowly destiny progresses by day. Night it is, and we have wine, so we can zoom out a little on time and

spread our wings over centuries. Bribery, fraud, embezzlement were the business as usual of centuries past. Sound practices in their day. Accounting, mild mannered as it was, and is played its part in the change. The same forces are at play, the same unfairness of the taking, holding or the misrepresentation of value for gain, the same inability to trust transaction in business or state, have no doubt, in 50 years time the word unsustainable will have the same association as corruption; illegal, immoral, reprehensible. This is a book of centuries with the ending the same in which today is just a page. Unsustainable practices will still exist, hidden, fudged - corruption still persists - but they will have to be hidden and fudged from the system of accounting before us. With the destination clear and certain be not disheartened but take the steps through which the inevitable manifests – Arjuna take up your bow and fight.

“Redefining value”. Value drives us. We are impelled to “build up our treasures.” We are in an endless quest for value – people purchase what they value – but its not the object itself but the qualities of it – newness, beauty, comfort, satisfaction, sensation, purpose. Of course its obvious that the object is irrelevant, so quickly we seek another substitute for the quality. Everything on earth is driven by the power of the sun – the bits of matter of the earth, every process that has shaped them from the original rock -even the gravitational presence of the central mass of dust before it ignited, but there is some intangible light from another sun, shining forth from us, from you right now as you are looking out from your eyes, as you look at your meal, and your wine, assigning it value above the wood on which it rests, coming from some powerhouse of perception behind your eyes, inside your chest, bringing beauty, delight, bringing every ounce of value.

We are trying to purchase the embedded rays from this other sun, given shape by the rays we see. Treasures are not dug from the earth, but rather the earth when polished reflects back gold.

This intangible sun of our own perception dominates us, everpresent, driving everything we value and so, in turn, driving the global economy. You can't turn it off, you can't pick and choose what it shines. With beauty comes truth. With desire comes compassion. With delight comes empathy. Economic systems, by definition, will, relentlessly, internalise intangibles. To not do so, to have a social construct that reflects imperfectly the truth about the origin of value, will ultimately lead to schism and the social construct will break and will then be reformed.

So now to the mystical text, we know well the words

Build up not up for yourselves treasures upon earth,
where moth and rust does corrupt,
and where thieves break through and steal
...where thieves break through and steal,
But build up for yourselves treasures in heaven

...

"I sent my Soul through the Invisible,
Some letter of that After-life to spell:
And by and by my Soul return'd to me,
And answer'd: 'I Myself [bring] Heav'n and Hell"