

One of the thoughts that from time to time occupies my mind relates very much to the *relevance* of what we teach. How useful will it be to students who will be going into the work force in eight years from now? Over the final months of last year I was able to leave Australia and work for a few weeks in a school in USA as well as visit other schools in South Korea, and China. Whilst travelling I started to put some of my stray thoughts into a sort of story format. What grew from them is this 'Essay'. I make no claims to any specific research and can say only that this is a story born from world events and my imagination. However it is also a comment on what education may look like 'some time' in the future.

HJ C-S.

C21 Boy.

David Blumenzweig woke slowly, he allowed the sound of the breaking waves to gradually penetrate his thoughts, whilst the distraught cries of sea birds echoed off the walls of his bedroom. He let his mind savour the adrenalin rushes that he had recently had on a difficult left hand break riding the great waves that the Indian Ocean thrusts onto and over the reef at Margaret River. Not the sort of water that anyone but a potential age group champion would be wise to venture against. He looked up and outwards at the great swells crashing against the reef, which he could clearly see from his floor level bed. "For God's sake David turn that racket down or I'll fry your fuses!" Rebecca his older sister was studying law and did not share his love of anything- apart from books. David reluctantly pointed his control at the plasma screen that took up a whole wall of his room and grinned to himself. A pretty neat way to wake up each day he thought all it needs is smell---I wonder.....

He yawned and stretched then clicked the control to command sequence.' Mentor' his Electronic Digital Assistant or EDA had been busy during the night and showed on the wall screen a list of 'finds' waiting in his folder. These related to an obscure early Australian poet and author Henry Lawson, whom he needed to write about for literature class. 'Click' and the days memos. 'Click' family messages and reminders..."ugh", 'Click' the surf report "yeh". 'Click' "you there Bug, com'on wake up!"a message flashed over his screen, also his embedded at birth nano chip pinged gently with a 'do soon' signal that alerted him to flip his wrist strap from sleep to wake mode. "Yeh" he said in his mind whilst looking at Leah's image as it commenced to fill his screen the more his mind concentrated on the signal inside

his head. They weren't really an item but his response to any thought flash from her could get her image onto the screen quicker than any other. "I've run down some biographical stuff on that Lawson guy, seems he was not around for long. Died of alcoholic induced poisoning around thirty or so."

"Well in those days they used to poison their minds to get their kicks, pretty weird."

"Suppose so. Anyway I'm getting a flash from Noam in Melbourne and you know how long he won't wait, got to go or I'll miss him and I want some help with bio-physics before class, speak later when we have conference with the group."

"Bye" Leah fades and David clicks his screen again.

"Mum I'm meeting with Leah and the group after I've finished at the annexe, we'll probably grab some food so don't do dinner for me -ok?" He points and selects Mother/ transmit/hold.

"Ok beta get moving, -bed hide" he commands in a louder voice. His ground level bed drops beneath the floor and panels slide across to hide it for the day. Living space costs big dollars, for transport is expensive, and most people walk as much as possible as well as living in high density family compounds.

David is living in the year 2099, he knows that his family came to Western Australia way back in the nineteen forties and fifties. These were his great grandparents on one side and great grandmother on the other. The state was just over a million souls in those days now it is nudging at sixty million, a number that stirs memories in his mind about his European roots and about the six million souls, inclusive of his ancestors that were victims of Hitler's 'racial cleansing'. Much has happened in between. The aftermath of the European second war brought his great grandfathers family and the Israeli 'Six Day' war had some bearing on his great grandmother's arrival. This new land gave them remarkable prosperity in the halcyon days of the 1990's before the world stock markets collapsed and America under their then President Bush led a ragtag of lesser countries into a perverted war to capture the major oil fields of the middle east and bind the world to American financial influences for all time. That Bush was blinded by his ideas of American rightness and technical superiority is history. What was overlooked were all of the simmering fires in many diverse areas waiting to be fanned into destructive blazes once the American might was committed in on place.

Ah the hindsight of history. Its all different now he thinks as he slips his laser pistol into a belt holster, we are the recipients of the idiocy that was around then, as the

world tried to adopt to being global, whilst living under the influences of hundreds, no two thousand years of tribalism. He checks the security codes on the wall display. No warm bodies within the screen, then switches to camera and metal detect, still clear, finally he rings the guard station for a perimeter check. 'Cant be too careful' he reasons. The 'Havenot' fringe-dwellers keep growing in numbers as more arrive via Indonesia driven by disease and abject poverty, following what are now recorded as 'The Energy Wars'. These were sparked by America in March 2003 and raged for fifty years, till not enough energy was left and they just fizzled out with no clear result. All were losers, now anarchy and war lords remain in all but a few countries, these were usually too remote or too technically behind to participate. For most of the world a new age of feudalism has begun. Australia's remoteness and particularly that of the West saved it in some degree. Sydney and Melbourne were wiped out by Chinese silkworm missiles and so called tactical nuclear warheads. Isolation and distance saved Perth. The Australian economy no longer supports a Navy or an Air Force, carbon based fuels no longer exists anyway. The army remains as a local militia and the countries boundaries are wide open to anyone. The defence of Australia is now based on 'distance and desert'. However since only sail is able to move on the worlds oceans and provide transport in local waters, such as David's memorable trip to Margaret River Surf Championships, there is presently little likelihood of any organised invasion, again due to the incredible distances that need to be traversed. Many people living in the Asian countries have little idea of the immense three million square miles that is the Australian continent. Nor of the waterless inhospitable land beyond its beaches that has claimed thousands of would be illegals or 'Havenots' as they have been dubbed. Still the tide of humanity trickles south from Asia defying all statistics by sheer will to live. One of his class group was stripped of his clothing and half beaten to death for his food tokens a few days ago by Havenots. He moves quickly across the small courtyard to his razor blade scooter, clips a newly charged solar cell in and shoots quietly along the covered walkway to his learning annexe a few hundred metres from home. The annexe is one of many scattered around the Perth area. David is an Einstein scholarship awardee, as are the members of his 'study group' and are on the student list of a high fee paying private school dedicated to these highly motivated and eager learners. Many were identified pre birth from gene scans and given special attention in both diet and brain stimulus whilst still embryonic. Their brain was in an advanced development stage from birth, witnessed

by their eye movements and attention to surroundings from almost the first few days of life. Many of his friends and contemporaries at the annexe are enrolled in both the State Government system as well as other classes of private schools. As well the top echelon, to which he belongs, run small business consultancies under supervision from their University supervisors. Student centred learning at last allows for fast track and many elite youngsters are achieving their Doctorates in their late teens or very early twenties. Knowledge is the new currency. All attend their communities learning annexe but log onto separate providers attached to their respective learning systems. The high cost of energy since the Energy Wars has made transport other than walking, cycling or solar cell type propulsion beyond the means of all but the mega rich. Hydrogen powered trucks are just becoming a reality but incredibly expensive to manufacture and with limited engine life, as the scientists search for ways to limit the power they generate. Currently they are too powerful and self-destruct too quickly to be an economic reality. The Perth based Orbital Engine Company never managed to convince manufacturers in the past of the technical brilliance of its ideas. Today it leads the so called technologically advanced world, such as remains, in hydrogen powered motors. Private cars now exist only in museums as a reminder of the abuse of resources practised by his grandfather's generation that hastened the Energy Wars. These were responsible for the destruction of most of Europe, the Indian sub-continent, as well as massive infrastructure damage to the East Coast of USA. China suffered severely from India and Pakistan's nuclear capability when she tried to force a route to middle east oil and bogged down into a nuclear shooting war. Taiwan and Japan hit China from the north and Australia in-cautiously attacked when the Chinese overran Singapore. The loss of both Sydney and Melbourne caused Australia to rethink its position but not before America had 'helped' with a few salvoes of missiles and low yield tactical war heads on major Chinese infrastructures. The almost total loss of the Chinese rice crop a few months later, to a previously unknown fungus, brought some sort of second thought process into play among the Chinese military. They retreated with little food left to keep their army alive. The civilian population either became forced emigrants, robbers or in too many instances corpses. China is thought to have lost forty percent of its population. All Asia had crumbled into a cauldron of despair, anarchy and abject poverty. Now fifty years on, still little capacity remains for feeding and clothing their populations which roam and rob wherever they please.

The remoteness of Australia and West Coast America saved those areas and consequently they now lead the technology recovery and the research efforts directed at finding alternate energy sources. But fifty years is hardly long enough in which to work miracles when half the then so called developed world has been obliterated by nuclear weapons as well as biological.

David arrives at the learning annexe and walks up to the iris check that identifies him and records his presence. His first stop is the cafeteria where his group normally congregate for a morning snack. He slips his food token into the card reader and moves into the que of students. They meet and greet in a friendly way for all have known each other since early childhood and many are on pre-agreed 'thought link terms' via their nano chips. David piles his tray and pushes it under the scanner as he also walks beneath the bio-recorder, a device that reads the real time medical report from the many slave micro nano-chips are dedicated to monitor all of the vital elements and organs in his body. "Re-assess, not approved" says a voice, the students have called this the 'Manic Medical Monster'.

"Oh Shit!" He remarks to no one in particular. "Hungry Jack is shore getting his revenge" for while at Margaret River and away from the daily body monitoring at food intake time David had splurged on fast food. He now has to take his tray for content assessment and adjust his meal to his body rather than his emotional wants. He passes the tray onto a conveyer belt and waits. Leah is getting flashes on thought-link and tunes in closer to monitor why he is so agitated. "M3 has caught David and he's pretty pissed off" she remarks to the group assembled at 'their' table. "Ah well that's the price of fame and over indulgence" remarks Andrew who is himself a star basketball player. David arrives with a bowl of salad and glass of water, scowling and withdrawn.

Leah passes him a note written in their private shorthand, "have some of my bacon sandwich and stop being so morose".

He flashes her a wry grin and shrugs. "Then I'll get caught in a spot check and have to do continuous gym till I've burned myself out and probably get kicked off the surf team for lack of self discipline. Sometimes I'd just like to be ordinary. Eat what I want, not have a gym quota to keep, be able stay out and go short on sleep, and not have some mechanical voice in my head saying 'cold shower, cold shower' whenever I get randy"

"You poor mis-treated boy she quips" as she drops her hand onto his and strokes it.

“Bitch!” That’s just cost me listening to ‘Moaning Mini’ saying ‘cold shower, cold shower’ and if I get any more of those this week coach is going to work me to a frazzle.

“OK guys” Leah calls the group together, “time to get On Task, yeh I know but.....”

“Jane what’s the latest situation with getting questionnaires out to our data gatherers for the Wesfarmers contract?”

Leah is a part of a consultancy group that runs social surveys for major organizations such as the Wesfarmers coglomerate. This is part of the ‘Real Time Learning Program’ whereby students actually contract to industry and get paid based on the commercial value of the result they produce. Many of these organizations gain high achieving trainees in this manner and assist materially with their education.

“Ok” says David “the printers have delivered and everything proofs out fine. The couriers pick up tomorrow and the schedule is for data collection to be complete by end of week. Then the big job for the team is data input, that’s scheduled over four evenings next week. Our next report will be in two days on progress”.

“OK guys better get to class and score some attendance points” So begins another week for a typical C21 teenager.

Harry Clements-Shepherd.

December 2002.