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TANTRA AS EPISTEME

A pedagogy of the future

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In the face of the contemporary university's failure to escape from economic rationality and therefore create environments conducive to positive futures an alternative model of university is proposed. This is based on an episteme rooted in Tantra, a world view that allows for a multi-layering of discourse to occur in order to greatly extend the university's mandate as a cultural catalyst for future generations. It is argued that Tantra, which is situated in a resurgent indigenous consciousness, is both ancient and modern possessing as it does the deep wisdoms of this episteme while being energised with a liberatory ethic aimed at physical, social and spiritual emancipation from exploitative ideologies. © 1998 Elsevier Science Ltd. All rights reserved

The purpose of this essay is to explore the concept of Tantra University. In it I propose to look at the state of universities in the late twentieth century and then move, through an examination of the deeper causal layers that contextualise this shift, to situate this concept within the frame of an emergent indigenous consciousness. This will take us far off the beaten academic track to work through the deep layers of discourse, cosmology, myth and metaphor that underpin this thinking. Finally I will outline the key concepts that inform this idea and proceed to an examination of the interesting possibilities that this concept may hold for future academic and intellectual explorations of what universities might engage in as valid education and research.

Many who follow this article may say, to quote the poet Wallace Stevens, 'but you do not play things as they are'. And they will certainly be right when looking at the 'story' from our current social and economic setting, but then this is not what futures is on about. Rather it is about finding, and playing, the 'tune beyond us, yet ourselves.'¹ Paul Wildman and Sohail Inayatullah's work on Causal Layered Analysis gives us a clue here.

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With this method we can go beyond conventional framings of issues. Each layer is an authentic strand within our experience of reality, and used as a tool of analysis we can, by '[m]oving up and down layers... integrate analysis and synthesis, and horizontally we can integrate discourses, ways of knowing and world views, thereby increasing the richness of analysis.'²

To get to the 'tune beyond us' we need to go on a long journey within³, to integrate and acknowledge all the layers that this epistemic shift embraces. We need to develop rationality that functions within the layers while at the same time developing a new language that allows us to communicate between the layers, as it were, so that to some extent at least the truths of one form become meaningful to another.

Setting the scene

We live at a time when universities have become large corporations producing and selling knowledge. As the postmodern philosopher Jean-Francois Lyotard wryly notes: 'Knowledge is and will be produced in order to be sold, it is and will be consumed in order to be valorised in a new production: in both cases, the goal is exchange.'⁴

This is a natural development that reflects our culture's commercial obsession with capital. The knowledge-power nexus transforms information into a commodity which can be exchanged in the university market place in the forms of bundles of 'information'. Knowledge is exchanged for power and vice versa. In this system, knowing and its product, knowledge that does not translate into information that can be observed, measured, controlled and easily exchanged, is excluded in favour of docile forms of knowledge that are more amenable to transaction.⁵

What is significant about this development is that as power has shifted from the hands of those with an investment in culture, the liberal elite, to those who create capital, the managerial elite, the emphasis of the university has shifted to reflect these changes. Thus the university acts as a repository of socially valued knowledge forms and we can track the fortunes of ideologies by following the appearance, popularity and disappearance of subjects on the timetable. So today we see that the liberal project has come on hard times and that it is being eclipsed by a technical and managerial rationality which has close links to capital and its production and is distant from what that arch-liberal Cardinal Newman described as a form of learning that 'refuses to be informed (as it is called) by any end'.⁶

This definition is of course suspect in that all institutional learning founded on this principal at least has the desired end of what the educational philosopher Paul Hirst describes as 'personal development by initiation into a complex of specific, substantive social practices with all the knowledge, attitudes, feelings, virtues, skills, dispositions and relationships that that involves.'⁷ Lyotard describes such initiates as 'heroes of knowledge'⁸ and Michael Peters sees them as 'trained in the great task of pursuing good ethico-political ends... leading their countries toward social progress'.⁹ Such postmodern thinkers have disturbed the neat liberal narrative of education leading to the good life, not only by questioning its underlying benevolence but also by offering a discourse of discontinuity and fragmentation. But such postmodern critique can hardly be held responsible for the shift that we have seen in the very substance of universities.

No, these shifts owe more to the liberal project itself than to any ideological critique. The creative Marxist thinker Antonio Gramsci saw the seeds of this shift years ago when

he described how the middle class, the architects of liberalism, had constructed an organic route, through education and law, that allowed all entry to its world. 'The bourgeois class poses itself as an organism in continuous movement, capable of absorbing the entire society, assimilating it to its own cultural and economic level.'¹⁰ Thus the state became the educator, opening the doors of hallowed institutions to any who sought them out. With this opening up, learning had to become more utilitarian because the focus of the majority has, within the modernist paradigm, to be on 'ends'. And also with this opening up Gramsci saw there comes a point of saturation at which the class itself starts to disintegrate and the state too ceases to be a useful unit of organisation.

It is at this point that we find ourselves today. Modernism appears to be on the point of collapse. The powers of the state have been eroded by the global market place and the individual has been cloned. Cultural critic John Ralston Saul describes this development as 'a hijacking of Western Civilization'.¹¹ His concern is that the West as a civilization has made no real progress over the past two and a half thousand years. Indian philosopher and mystic Prabhat Rainjan Sarkar has made the same assertion. Progress is illusory and should not be measured in technical terms.¹² Saul argues that we are in the grip of unifying narratives that blind us to reality, we are in fact an unconscious civilization in which 'we are actually teaching most people to manage not to think.'¹³

Universities are in trouble, as all they do is reflect the dominant values of a culture which has ceased to dialogue with itself. They have ceased to create culture, to offer safe havens for dissent, to create their own future. They are now tied to the purse strings of fearful governments more worried about being returned at the next election than about the long term effectiveness of these institutions as generators of a learning culture which might help us enter the next millenium with vision and dignity.

Learning reframed

The purpose of this essay is not to chronicle the parlous state of universities in the late twentieth century. Rather it is to chart a course of vision and hope into the next millenium, (if we are using the Western calendar), by looking at the reasons for the system's failure and to recontextualise learning within an episteme that allows for human potential to be expanded to include new ethical and spiritual dimensions.

Central to this new episteme is the thinking of Prabhat Rainjan Sarkar, but his is not a lone voice, as many people from many traditions are turning away from material rationality and its managerial and hegemonic agenda by seeking to chart alternatives that are creative and more fully atuned to human aspiration and spirit. Thus Rabindranath Tagore started a university earlier this century and more recently William Irwin Thompson and a group of English intellectuals founded the learning community of Lindesfarne in the United States. Sarkar is however a seminal thinker and it is his vision of a Tantra University, embedded in a spiritualized education system, that will be examined here as an example of how different universities of the future may be from their lack-lustre ancestors.

Escalation and the search for a new discourse

Sarkar began laying the philosophical foundations for his educational vision in the mid 1950s. Central to this project is his recognition that we, as a global civilisation, are rapidly approaching a crisis the resolution of which will only come about through a shift of

consciousness. The new consciousness will be holistic, having its roots deep within an indigenous appreciation that it is consciousness not humanity that is central to the drama of existence. Because this reframing greatly expanded the humanist mandate which placed human consciousness on centre stage Sarkar called this new awareness of our interconnection with the universe, Neo-Humanism.

David Spangler in a recent reappraisal of the New Age movement pointed directly to the fundamental issue of our times, the birth pangs of a new consciousness. Such an immense shift has not been seen since the emergence of civilisation itself thousands of years ago. 'We are in the midst of a process of reimagining and reinventing ourselves and our world.'¹⁴ But this shift is not occurring without pain and disruption.

The massive escalation in the dominance and penetration of managerial and corporate psychology; the hunger to possess and control that drives all agents within society from the individual to the vast corporation via nuclear family and nation state; the fear of difference and the need to silence dissent through a wide range of media, from the bullet to the universalisation of the unreflective consciousness of television and cyber space; and the total disregard for the integrity of the natural world and our own bodies which we poison and pillage at will; all reflect the force that is amassing to contest the emergence of this new ethic.

Power never willingly surrenders to change. It intensifies its means of control through the technologies that penetrate the most deeply into everyday life—the visual, oral and print media along with education and an economic system that binds all to it through the linking of personal autonomy and happiness with economic success.

This escalation cannot be sustained indefinitely. Modernism relies on the concept of indefinite progress to maintain its own momentum, but progress which is synonymous with environmental, psychological and spiritual exploitation cannot last. Ziauddin Sardar points to this when he asserts that 'the innate and powerful desire for meaning and identity in non-Western societies (and I would add non-Western psychologies) cannot be eradicated.'¹⁵ Sardar calls this desire 'traditional idealism'¹⁶ and it is in this non-Western critique of the centre, to which Sarkar belongs, that lies the creativity and depth to accomplish the reimagining of ourselves and our future.

Tantra and 'traditional idealism'

It is from this space that Sarkar's civilisational discourse emerges. In reimagining the future he weaves stories of continuity and discontinuity. Tantra is essentially a world view rooted in indigenous pre-aryan Indian culture.¹⁷ Its historical roots go at least as far back as the peaceful Dravidian peoples who lived on the Indus river and gave rise to what archaeologists call the Indus Valley civilization which flourished about 2500 BC and was swept away by the Aryan invasions of Northern India about 1700 BC. The warlike Aryans brought with them the earliest Vedas and wove into their own culture the cosmology of Tantra.

This tantric tradition has never died in India and in many forms it has permeated other cultures, particularly in its Buddhist and Jain manifestations. Today Tantra is alive and well and has made successful inroads into popular Western culture through the modern fascination with the 'spiritual treasures of the orient', hence the success of Vivekananda and Yogananda in the United States earlier this century and more recently of Mahar-

isi Mahesh Yogi, who began the transcendental meditation movement, and Shrii Satya Sai Baba.

Successful movies such as *Star Wars* have further popularised concepts central to Tantra such as self perfection gained through disciplined training and the existence of an all pervading 'force', which in tantric literature would be called 'Consciousness'. These ideas are not unique and corollaries are found in all spiritual traditions drawing as they do on the deep collective myths of the human soul. What is unique about the way Sarkar has redefined Tantra is that it gives very clear form to these popularised images and fuses them in a spiritual and social agenda that generates the energy and vision to begin the project of social reconstruction.

Being deeply rooted in the indigenous experience of reality Tantra has a broad meta-physical base which allows for ways of knowing, feeling and processing that go far beyond the limited rationality that informs the Western Enlightenment project. Priorities are different as Sarkar notes because, 'spiritual life controls all other arenas of human life.'¹⁸ This perspective generates a synthesising outlook steeped in what Sarkar calls 'spiritual vision'. So in Sarkar's Tantric world view

- the individual can only exist within a collective, he or she has no meaning otherwise. Individual and collective consciousness work together in striving to overcome the physical obstacles that arise on the path of evolution.
- Soul or Consciousness is an infinite and eternal entity of which we are a spark. We are part of an ongoing unending cosmic dreaming.¹⁹
- Reality is relative but very real from our position within its unfolding story.
- We have relationship with everything and are thus responsible for the maintenance of the whole by serving the parts. This relationship is sacred and our service is the way we maintain our mythic connection to the whole. The personal drama of life is also mythic and reflects our relationship with the sacred.

Most indigenous cultures have found their purpose to be in maintaining cosmic balance and working in harmony with others and their environment.²⁰ In many ways traditional Tantra also followed this pattern. Modern Tantra, as Sarkar has defined it, has a more dynamic agenda. It is specifically liberatory and therefore political. *Tan* in Sanskrit means 'bondage', and *tra* means 'to liberate from'.²¹ Traditionally this was interpreted to mean the individual transcending the limitations of their own ego. Sarkar radically shifted the emphasis from the individual to the collective by linking the two so that neither could progress without the other. Spirituality ceases to be selfish and becomes a collective act.

Within this construction of Tantra the individual works for their own liberation by following specific physical, social and spiritual practices, while at the same time struggling to free others from physical, social and spiritual bondage. This brings to spirituality an ironic tension in which the individual must engage with the world in many ordinary and extraordinary ways. Thus 'spirituality is both a grand project and an everyday task',²² as the bioethicist Jennifer Fitzgerald points out. The poet David Rowbotham summed the situation up nicely when he wrote, 'Pray speak beauty. But dust first spoke.'²³ Much of the energy and dynamism of Tantra lies in this ironic tension.

It is on this expanded definition of Tantra that Sarkar has based his educational philosophy. Sarkar is offering a meta-narrative of power which is deeply attuned to the yearnings of the human soul, what Fitzgerald calls the 'innate desire to expand one's potential.'²⁴ Yet Saul rails against the dominance of meta-narrative in the form of ideology

in the twentieth century,²⁵ but his complaints are directed at materialistic and mechanistic ways of interpreting and acting upon life. Neil Postman, states that the deeper 'gods' are dead and that education has died because we now only educate in self interest. He argues strongly that the human 'genius lies in our capacity to make meaning through the creation of narratives that give point to our labours, exalt our history, elucidate the present, and give direction to the future.'²⁶ Sarkar shares this opinion and offers deep spiritual tantric narrative as the way to establish education and culture in a future that weds material reality with deeper readings of life.

Key concepts

Universities have been through many changes since their creation, being capable, as Peter Scott reminds us, of 'ceaseless adaptation'.²⁷ They possess a dynamism that ensures their relevance for future generations. Sarkar's concept of Tantra is certainly dynamic but it shifts the emphasis of the university away from its traditional base. In earlier liberal constructions of the university, knowledge was often an end in itself, the possession of which endowed its owner with significant cultural capital. Later the most privileged knowledge came to be linked with mastery over technology, either institutional or real. Sarkar appreciates the cultural value of knowledge and its technical importance but he places these discourses, the liberal and managerial, within an expanded metaphysical framework.

Sarkar's agenda directly involves the university in activities which will take those engaged in them into the community in a facilitative and participatory way. The origin of this shift lies in an episteme rooted in an ethical relocation of purpose from individual aggrandisement to social responsibility situated in a spiritual world view.

The key concepts that underpin this relocation are:

- the theory of *Proutist economics*, provides the understanding of the social process needed to promote justice and equity taking into account the forces of capital, human ambition and ecological responsibility;²⁸
- the philosophy of *Neo-Humanism*, a holistic philosophy which situates all human activity in intimate and reverential relationship with the universe, spiritualising the educational mission;²⁹
- *microvita* theory, subtle energy waves which affect matter and thought, changes our foundational assumptions about science and learning;³⁰
- theory of *mind*, mind has many layers of which academic discourse acknowledges only one, reframes what constitutes knowledge, intelligence and communication;³¹
- theory of *prama*, describes all individual and social structures in terms of physical, psychic and spiritual balance, along with Prout makes much of what universities do start with the practical, such as ecological degradation and economic disparity;³²
- concept of *aesthetics* as a liberatory (ie, purposeful) activity, the arts are drawn into the centre of human learning and experience as an important way to develop intuitional intelligence;³³
- reconceptualisation of *history*, history is cyclic and evolutionary, redraws our understanding of human progress and of the function of education;³⁴
- *linguistics*, as a science is spiritualised with the introduction of Tantric theory of vibration and form, sound reflects intent and also psychology—this is essential in understanding human mind and cultural expressions;³⁵

- *sadhana*, meditative practice, research redefined to include intuitional science;
- concept of *ecology* situates universities as part of projects designed to heal, protect and nurture the earth as extensions of their community.³⁶

These concepts provide the organising principles for the Tantra University. Growing out of traditional structures they empower human agency well beyond the limits offered by those structures. Agency vivifies structure, which in turn locates agency within a cosmology that promotes universalism instead of the entrenched individualism of Western culture. In this way Sarkar escapes both the traditional passivity associated with indigenous expression and the dynamic but self-centred individualism that typifies the West.

Thus freed from its cultural moorings Tantric episteme, as encapsulated in these key concepts, has applicability well beyond India and south east Asia. By introducing dynamic universalist ethics to Tantra Sarkar has created the conditions for a breaking down of barriers relating to culture, class, gender and species. The result is potent indeed and has great significance for all explorations of culturally relevant alternatives to the dominant Enlightenment model of education.

In this way dissent emerges from the periphery to recover what the Indian futurist Ashis Nandy calls the 'other selves' that non-Western cultures have written out of their own stories in order to fit into the dominant categories of the West. Sarkar's revitalising of Tantra offers resistance to what Nandy calls the 'dominant politics of knowledge'³⁷. Thus Tantra resists the structural violence of colonisation, those 'monocultures of the mind', which according to peace educator Frank Hutchinson have led to the 'domestication or impoverishment of social imagination.'³⁸

It is important to realise that Tantra represents an epistemic shift that critiques and expands all practices, both Western and non-Western, in the light of universalist ethics. By asserting that Tantra is rooted in an indigenous Indic episteme is not to assert that such an episteme is accepted uncritically or that Tantra will colonise in the name of this episteme. Tantra seeks to create universal culture based on generally shared values inherent to the key concepts described above. Sarkar laid great emphasis on this fact. The nature of epistemic shifts is, as feminist futurist Ivana Milojevic observed, to 'help bring about new resolutions, policies and actions.'³⁹ From such resolutions, policies and actions emerges the new informed by its past. In this sense Tantra is no longer indigenous but trans-digenous⁴⁰ as it no longer has regard for traditional boundaries.

This disregard for boundaries fits well within the context of our emergent global culture which has scant regard for many of the divisive practices that constitute earlier forms of cultural expression and oppression. But globalism needs to be tempered by concepts such as those inherent to the episteme of Tantra because, as the Islamic cultural critic Ziauddin Sardar has observed, it is becoming synonymous with the extension of capitalism and Western culture and is therefore perceived to be inimical to all non-Western peoples.⁴¹

Tantra University

It has been very important to delve into the ontological nature of the idea of Tantra University, because without this exploration of the nature of what is being proposed, the magnitude of the concept could be overlooked.

From the perspective of Tantra, 'things as they are', are very different from the way

our culture currently operates. A Tantra University functions on the premise that human beings are spiritual beings having a human experience. The metaphor for Tantra is essentially that of the battle field of the Kuruksetra where Krishna recited the *Bhagavat Gita* and encouraged Arjun to fight the forces that would deny humanity their birthright: to live safely free from hunger, exploitation, disease and ignorance, and to explore their own consciousness and their relationship with the divine without being constrained by dogma and bigotry.

The experiment is already under way in India where the organisation Sarkar established in 1955, *Ananda Marga*, has started the first Tantra University at Ananda Nagar in West Bengal. This project, which is part of a broader educational movement called *Ananda Marga Gurukula* that ranges from kindergarten to university, has already attracted much interest amongst India's intelligentsia who are looking for ways to escape the dominant Enlightenment model of learning that was imported into India by the British. Over all, *Gurukula*, (an ancient sanskrit term denoting the residence of a realised teacher, ie a place for deep learning) as the entire campus is called, offers courses that include the staple university threads such as the sciences and humanities, but stretch far beyond them in an attempt to embrace the deeper mythic and cosmological realities that are part of the Indian consciousness. The Tantra University is one institution amongst many on this campus. Its focus is on 'the application of Tantric precepts to contemporary problems facing society—political, economic, social, educational, environmental and the rest.' Its stated mission is to 'foster social changes based on justice to all beings.'⁴²

This institution is very active and offers courses in a wide variety of esoteric subjects such as Tantra Philosophy, Kundalini, Yantra and Palmistry together with more practically oriented subjects such as Food, Health and Consciousness, Body/Mind System and Models of World Government. Some interesting developments within this university are its determination to sponsor poor and tribal peoples and the way it breaks down disciplinary boundaries to allow for rich rereadings of old discourses. Thus they bring spiritual philosophy to bear on political theory as part of their Proutist Economics course, also we find homeopathy, ayurveda and other indigenous medical practices being taught alongside, and interacting with, western allopathic medicine.

Western explorations

Education systems must be culturally relevant. The Tantric episteme promoted by Sarkar has meaning beyond its traditional boundaries because of its rootedness in an ethical universalism. This is of course the 'acid test' of any philosophy closely associated with its culture of origin: does structure prevail over agency? Can Tantra University function in a Western context in which it is not directly supported by the culture that gave it birth?

As was noted above, it is Tantra's rootedness in an episteme that dynamically promotes universal ethics that frees it from its cultural moorings. It may be born of an indigenous Indic episteme but it transcends these roots to become flexible enough to integrate with other cultures in an endless array of forms. This brings me to another experiment being conducted by a group in Brisbane, Australia. In this case a Tantra University of a very different kind is taking shape. Here the emphasis is on creating a loose network of scholars, artists and activists whose work is in some way informed by the thought of P. R. Sarkar. The group communicates through email and offers seminars, they are in the process of developing short courses that elucidate Tantric concepts like microvita, neo-

humanism and prama. Social and political commentary, as well as feminist theory are also being developed with particular reference to Prout.

Much of the work of this group will be done electronically through the world wide web. The study of microvita shows us that all subtle things can be carried instantly from one place to another in the form of ideas⁴³ and there seems to be no reason why the spirit of a thing cannot also be imparted in this way through the cyber waves, but there comes a time in Tantra that you must 'be' with your teachers, share their space. *

With this in mind a physical campus is planned that will be both a place of learning and contemplation since learning is no longer simply an intellectual activity. Meditative practice becomes part of the overall study programme so that the student comes to feel, to 'taste' as the mystics call it, the deeper layers of their quest for knowledge. In this way Matthew Fox's call to 'educate in awe'⁴⁴ becomes real. In this way too, the student and the teacher become equal partners on the deeper cosmological journey of the soul, because meditation is the great equaliser. Yet the teacher remains as a catalyst promoting by their very physical presence the validity of a spiritual world view.

So in our post-industrial world where all spaces, thankfully, leak the concept of university can avail itself of all media at its disposal. The Western challenge is to transcend the deep structures that inform our thinking on learning and the university. Transformative educational practice can take place through any media, so in this sense Jim Dator's⁴⁵ claim that the university as a physical monolith is in decline has validity. What will emerge is hard to see but if the concept 'learning community' has any meaning in the future, and the role of teacher retains its relevance for the learning process, then a physical site for people to come together and share their enthusiasm, experience and wisdom will no doubt endure.

Adventures in curriculum

The activities of both the Indian and Western groups reflect a disregard for conventional divisions of knowledge. This is because in Tantra knowledge is rooted in deeper epistemes of meaning in which discrimination and wisdom are valued over 'information retrieval'. Conventional disciplines only have relative meaning in this broader discourse in which, as Rick Slaughter commented, 'we are all and always immersed in a stream of knowing in a world brimming with immanent meaning.'⁴⁶

This loosening of the stranglehold of disciplines on the mind allows for a great unleashing of creativity. What this means to us now in a world still dominated by the compartmentalised world view it is hard to say but we can certainly indulge ourselves here with a little educated guess work. Links between the arts and science could become real as scientists and artists discover that what they are both dealing with is microvita, those subtle energy waves that both generate life and influence thought and emotion. Historians too can bring an understanding of microvita into their work, once again in collaboration with scientists and artists, and perhaps we will see courses like Microvita and Revolutions, and Microvita and the History of Ideas on campuses of the future.

Tantric understanding of the body as a subtle system of energy centres, called *chakras*, is also fruitful for many disciplines. Doctors may study chakras in conjunction with musicians, whose music influences the function of these centres, in learning new ways to deal with disease. Perhaps people may devise courses like Immunology and Chakras, and Tone and Microvita in the Treatment of Tropical Disease. Similarly the

tantric theory of the mind as a many layered system may have great implications for psychology, medicine and the humanities. The introduction of this concept of layers, called *koshas*, may lead to the birth of courses like Crimonology and Kosha Theory, or Kosha, Chakra and Language Groups—Explorations in Cross Cultural Linguistics.

These courses may sound strange to modern ears but the real power of these ideas to transform our understanding of current disciplines should not be underestimated. Take another example using Proutist economic theory. Here we can imagine courses like Proutistic Strategies for Agrarian Reform in Papua New Guinea and Proutistic Business Management. Education will be transformed with the appearance of Neo-Humanism shifting the emphasis from discipline and control to Neo-Humanistic learning strategies. Subjects will appear like Neo-Humanistic Child Development and Neo-Humanistic Curricular Development. Teacher training may involve subjects like Ethical Mathematics and Overcoming Learning Blocks: Reincarnation Theory and the Developing Mind.

The possibilities are endless and fascinating to explore, even with our limited consciousnesses. Playing like this fills me with a sense of pathos at the suffering we endure because of our isolation within a rationalist framework. 'If only...' I keep whispering to myself. But all the signs are here that change, major change is on the way. The presence of thinkers like Sarkar confirm this. Too much is already giving way for the old boundaries and constructs to last.

Question time

Our curricular adventures and the experiments in India and Australia raise many questions such as, What does constitute authentic spirituality? Will only one form of meditation be considered valid? How will the wide variety of spiritual traditions be housed within such an institution? Does site privilege local populations? What qualifications of a spiritual nature might be required of academics? What will be the role of teachers? Can wisdom be institutionalised? These and many other questions need to be answered. One thing to remember is that such experiments are simply transitional, and definitely necessary as it is only by working on the ground with theory that change can come about.

We must also remember Nietzsche's observation that 'All philosophers share this common error: they proceed from contemporary man and think they can reach their goal through an analysis of this man... Lack of a historical sense is the original error of all philosophers...'⁴⁷ When we combine this with Spangler's suspicion that, 'It is entirely possible (and most analysts and futurists I have read or talked to agree on this) that the most profound transformations are still unfolding or have yet to appear',⁴⁸ then we can really only begin to wonder what shifts in consciousness are likely to characterise the world of our great grand children and therefore what kind of institutions will they build.

Imagining the future

I would like to conclude this investigation into the concept of Tantra University with an imaginary walk around such an institution in the year 2100.

The air is fresh and clear as I walk onto campus past a cluster of mango trees, I smile to myself as I see a friend wrapped in the shade of the trees quietly meditating before the morning classes start. The campus, if that is what you could call it, is pleasantly scattered across the hills and pastures. I notice some keen students working with one of

the elders in a vegetable patch and wonder how their microvita experiments are going with the broad beans. I remember reading that classic by Sheldrake in which he talked about morphogenic fields, what a rush of excitement I'd felt when I'd sat in a field of wheat with an elder and listened—yes, I had really felt that field singing, humming.

My destination is coming into view. A long lowset mud brick building in front of a neat satellite dish. The building has to be made of this sturdy stuff in order not to interfere with the subtle frequencies of the dish that so cleverly scans the heavens. Once acres of land had to be covered to achieve a hundredth of what that dish can pick up, particularly now that one of our elders has discovered how to harness the meditative mind to the listening of the satellite.

I pass a number of Christian students singing in the sunlight as they enter the medical science library. Some children ride by me on their way to school. School is only 3 hours a day, more than enough time to learn what is needed to handle the scanners and computers in the libraries. Students spend much of their time working with their parents or in other trades, experiencing the world before they make choices about their futures.

The peace of the earth rises up as I walk along, being an historical type I cast my mind back a century to the time of chaos when big cities dominated the earth. Now that is all gone, swept away in the massive decentralisation movements of the '20s and '30s—a civilisation deconstructs itself. Now the earth is more populous than ever but we live soft. We listen, we are born listening; we respect one another and we share; there is enough food for all as we no longer eat meat and community is held together through small constellations of suburbs that criss-cross the landscape. But that is enough day dreaming, I will be late for my class on interstellar deep mind physics.

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