

## *Freerangin' on - Could Schumacher's 'Small' Be Yet 'Beautiful' –?*

### **Intro**

Fritz Schumacher wrote his well-known *Small is Beautiful* work awhile back in the 1970's, probably before modern western-type cultures for example, seemed to seek to have quite so much 'big' control (*recent UK example : headteachers of schools had discretionary powers removed in favour of more central governmental control*). The best governments are seemingly no longer those 'that govern least', as the older saying has it, though delegation-style management may could well still be effective, particularly maybe if human motivation is sought (*non-delegated centralised control being one of the key reasons why Scotland may 'go independent' - ?*) Is 'motivation' sought, though? It's probably likely to be independent and internal to the individual, which may well not suit a 'high control' form of management style akin, maybe, to large-scale 'battery' management style rather than individual motivation 'freerange' mode - ? In a recent UK broadsheet piece, the well-known social and environmental commentator, George Monbiot, argues, for instance, that 'nothing threatens democracy as much as corporate power', proceeding then to indicate the extent of 'largist' control and influence.

For the individual, might this, though, be the rub, the issue - ? Can, for instance, life beyond existence levels be sustained by such large-scale control systems (eg. rise of non-secure zero hours working situations), or is a level of 'devolution' needed- ? Can the individual gain 'fulfillment' via any other route than by motivated individual questing and attainment, which the existence of such 'largist' powerful forces might counter/restrict - ? Does the 'power/ control' movement 'feed off itself', then becoming evermore powerful and controlling - ? And does the 'big control' culture then threaten individual rights , freedoms and speech, as George Monbiot, above, appears to be suggesting - ?

*(one large commercial retailing organisation has, for instance, been caught threatening un-supportive eastern journalists via large lawsuits ) .*

Such existential questioning and debate does not seem to be too much part of 'collective' existence in the UK in modern times, perhaps unsurprisingly given the strength of modern focus on material lifestyles, wealth accumulation and culture conditioning, and away from matters 'social' and/or 'spiritual' - ? Material goals have maybe an initial advantage of being concrete and hence measurable (*the age of the accountant*), and no doubt more nebulous concepts such as 'higher consciousness', fulfillment even, might therefore be brushed aside – maybe a little too quickly and easily, though - ? (there are still movements devoted to aiding people to find their 'higher fuller selves', for instance).

At the individual (*i.e. 'micro-small'*) level, for instance, it could be possible that some - many? - experience deeper, more multi-dimensional aspects of life, and for whom fulfillment, for instance, represents a natural human need, and for whom life is a journey of discovery, rather than, say, just a 'chase for the dollar' - ? An eastern-originated concept, for instance, demonstrates the sequence :

*Mass > Individual > Spiritual/Higher Consciousness (personal),*

describing a possible 'life journey' route.

This piece therefore aims to seek to try to undertake some exploration of the '*Small might yet be Beautiful*' territory', devoting also some time to wider existential issues, looking at why thinking '*small*' might yet be important, how it might '*fit in*'; as usual though, in the form of that of the '*enthusiastic amateur*' – it is after all one (interested) person's take, who has useful small (rural) independent business expertise and experience, the gaining of which stimulated such exploration instincts.

### ***Western-style materialistic – based cultures: limited dimensionally – ?***

Back along, in the 1970's, Fritz Schumacher was concerned with what he called '*the rising tide of giantism*', in which organisations get larger and then become ever more powerful, with the implication that they could easily then become over powerful (*on the traditional basis of 'power corrupting'*). He was probably talking then mainly of commercial organisations, but no doubt might include governments, looking at, for instance, in the UK, for instance, the degree to which government intervenes in life and appears to want to have '*big control*'.

Are Schumacher's concerns materialising - ? Large, powerful food retailers have been fined for food price collusion, and the same, as above, have been found trying to muscle journalists abroad into not scribing copy critical of them. Energy companies, similarly now organised into mainly '*oligopolistic*' (few large suppliers) format, and are suspected, maybe not unnaturally, of manipulating the market to their own interests. Currently financial concerns are reportedly being brought to brook over the apparently myriad of hidden charges involved in them organising peoples' pensions.

( currently (spring 2014), it's reported that moves are now afoot in the UK to break down large energy companies to ensure greater competition).

Big emphasis in recent years has been placed on '*free market*' approaches – letting the demand and supply influences in the marketplace operate unhindered to then create a '*true*' market price, bringing demand and supply into a '*natural equilibrium*'. If this happens with many buyers ('*demanders*') and many sellers ('*suppliers*'), with none of them big enough to influence market conditions by themselves, then the price set will be a '*true*' price reflecting current supply and demand conditions, and such a market is said to be a '*perfect*' market.

### ***'Small' is then good ---?'***

The implication relating to the perfect market, then, is that '*small*' is good, is beneficial, for then the essential condition of '*many buyers and sellers*' will exist, and any '*unnatural*' manipulation of the market by, say, large (*over*) powerful players can then not take place, ensuring true price levels truly reflecting demand and supply conditions. Maybe this is why there is often such a stress on the benefits of '*economies of scale*' from the large players, maybe keen to stress '*benefits*' to try to counteract/avoid any criticism of '*un-free*' markets being created - ?

### ***'Whatever -----'***

Allied to the strong support there's been for the '*free*' market, seems to have been the adoption in some quarters, of the notion that individuals and organisations are then free to do '*whatever they want*', ( the '*market decides*' type of position), which some have expressed reservations concerning '*longer-term*' human values and ethics. At the same time it must be true that

individuals/organisations have to act in their own interests within the market place, although again some have had reservations that there may well have been over-emphasis on '*competitiveness*', for instance.

Such an unregulated and un-refereed '*free market*' situation appears to have in practice resulted in the '*largist*' culture, quite possibly fuelled by such a strong emphasis on competitiveness and the '*winning*' mindset. One '*captain of the food industry*', also at the time a senior UK government advisor, demonstrated such modern attitudes, saying in a speech to higher education students, that '*only the fittest will survive*'. With such a ('*minimal*' - ?) culture, such a statement could well be a truism, raising in the longer term, for instance, the spectre of Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*, with the world organised into three huge power blocks, leaving little scope for individuality - ?

Such a possible outcome, of course, would not seem to be the best news for the tiny, micro powerless unit that is the individual, and particularly for those individuals – '*freerangers*' - that want at least some opportunity to dare to think for themselves, live independently and work out their own values and destinies.

### ***'Try a little tenderness----- ?'***

Rationally it could be hard to gainsay the promoters, often seemingly '*captains of industry*', of the '*economies of scale – large is beautiful*' school ( although not necessarily strictly true - business consultancy experience shows that for responsiveness and efficiency, smaller size firms with pared back overhead costs can be hard to beat – maybe this drive to '*big*' might be to do with a '*safety in numbers*' mindset (*i.e. in a threatening 'competitiveness' world - ?*)). The modern scientific age is by definition steeped in rationalism, and some might say, lacks balance brought by the third key life element of '*heart*'. This is pretty much what Gary Zukav was saying in his thought-provoking book *The Seat of the Soul* :

*'In a world that understands power as external, the intellect often functions without the compassionate influence of the heart. This creates situations in which intellectual power is used as a weapon to harm others, to exert will-power without tenderness. The intellect is meant to expand perceptions, to help people to grow in perceptual strength and complexity, and not to harm others.'*

Such a quote raises the fairly obvious question as to whether '*collective man*' might be '*on a wrong road*', as the quote has it, and whether it's a road of '*autocratic*' mode via '*largist*' strength and power ('*might then being right*' - ?)– a road which has been traversed ultimately to seemingly no longer-term avail quite a few times in the past, and again which could work against the fuller development of the individual and individual professionalism and self-responsibility - ?

Facing up to the possibility of '*wrong road*' travel may not always be easy, as with facing up to the possibility of negative outcomes. One of the possible '*costs*' to modern ( '*youngist type*' - ?) materialistic cultures could be the loss of influence of experienced campaigners (tending to be older) who having had reversal and '*failure*' experiences in life, are then well placed to deal with non-ideal situations - ? ( *is this why older people can attract the 'grumpy' tag – they don't have to have the 'bowl of cherries' relentlessly positive outlook - ?*) One potentially helpful strategy could be then to adopt the '*work in progress*' mindset, useful also to fit with the '*life as a journey*' philosophy suited to '*freerange*' living.

### ***' Careful for what is wished for --- ?'***

It seems to be a paradox of modern western-type cultures, based initially on free speech and the

rights of the individual, that such a '*largist*' power-based situation is now a potential – and quite possibly, real – threat to the individual and his /her rights; the free – '*perfect*' – market appearing to have now transmuted into the '*largist*' power-based '*free-for-all*' model - ? Maybe this isn't too unexpected, considering many of the previous shackles such as religious influences and ethical factors appear to have lost considerable '*restraining power*' in such new '*free*' culture, allied to the onset of the mind- orientated scientific, rational age ( *in which man can tend to become 'supreme'* - ?) allied then with the '*do whatever you want*' modern free market mindset , further allied with the possibility of governments being '*over-focused*' on commercial interests, making it then more difficult for them to carry out any needed '*refereeing*' role - ?

Given then also the surge in competitive energy with a seemingly laser-beam emphasis on '*winning*', all of these factors could perhaps be predicted maybe to then produce the non-perfect market conditions of fewer suppliers, all now able to manipulate the market in their own direction and hence, by default, to the detriment of others, and perhaps, particularly, to the detriment of the least powerful '*micro*' unit – the individual - ?

Such a notion would then seem to raise two further possible considerations – the need for refereeing within the '*free-market*' scenario to maintain reasonably level '*playing fields*', and the nature of freedom itself. If '*God*' is no longer a '*parental*' directing figure, (eg. in western cultures) and '*man*' is then '*in control*', then presumably '*man*' has to assume the mantle of responsibility - there is then no other option, no-one else to blame, to whom to accord responsibility - ?

If, as above, a '*healthy*' market situation then transmutes into a less healthy, power-concentrated situation, then some might presumably say there's a need for some degree of overall control – '*refereeing*' – if longer-term limitations are to be avoided - ? Maybe an analogy could be that of two football teams competing against each other, definitely then needing the '*level playing field*' -----?.

### **'Referee ---- !'**

What would happen, for instance, if there was no refereeing function (an interesting experiment to try – has been written – William Golding's '*Lord of the Flies*' - ?). Quite possibly, footballing skills and team coherence would be casualties -? ). A good, refereed, '*true*' football match involving such '*natural*' levels of competitiveness amongst so many people, could then be described as a triumph for '*civil*' life – a positive contribution to civilisation - ?

The '*reining in*'/refereeing of competitiveness (*i.e. not 'extinguishing'*) may be then a key factor in maintaining a healthy society, especially in a culture which actively extols and amplifies it - ? ( *aren't people competitive enough - might over focus and promotion of it ultimately produce 'imbalance', and adverse effects - ?*) Maybe, then, to maintain and enhance civilisation, and human development, the effective and '*right*' level of refereeing needs to exist within a culture – a broad-based governing responsibility ?

(*Does this call into the question the party-based 'vested interest' type government having the credentials for 'effective refereeing' - ? Or has the 'overview/overall' aspect to government been weakened by an 'imbalanced' degree of focus on commercial success and wealth making - ?*)

### **'Elysian fields ----?'**

A useful historical example of '*government refereeing*' could be taken from the experience over the years of milk producers in the UK. Back along, in the 1920's/30's, milk in the UK was produced in relatively small amounts by many independent producers, but milk buying firms were far larger

concerns, then using their muscle to drive down the milk price to the producers. The *'refereeing'* solution then was to create a national producers coop (*the Milk Marketing Board*), to *'balance up'* the power of the large buyers, and thus to ensure milk price then reflected supply and demand conditions in the market place, rather than a dominant force skewing market place conditions. This move was successful and independent, *'small'* dairy producers thrived in the UK for many years, until the national producers coop was dismantled some years ago and a so-called *'free'* market then took over (*why was the producer coop dismantled -? Who lobbied for it - ? Was it part of a 'free-market' (or 'free-for-all') ideology drive - ?*)

### ***'Dairy industry aversion ----- ?'***

Once again, the smaller milk producers in the UK currently appear to have in more recent times suffered at the hands of large powerful buyers, but this time no refereeing moves and the small players left to fend for themselves in what many in the industry perceive as a large player-skewed market. The further concern amongst the milk producers is that there is a longer-term agenda (*'small' production being 'anathemic' to large players focused on the benefits of 'economies of scale'*) to force the *'small'* producers out of business, to be then replaced by large-scale US – style indoor factory farming milk production units, owned and controlled by large concerns (*one US unit on UK TV back along had 30,000 cows under roofs at one site, for instance*).

Big on *'economies of scale'* efficiencies, maybe, but pretty short maybe on providing *'natural behaviour'* environment for animals, the maintenance of independent rural lifestyles, and quite possibly, rural communities - ? And, at the same time, eroding independence, individualism and freeranging opportunities - ?

### ***'Scales ----'***

The seemingly widespread *'automatic'* assumption these days that *'big'* and *'economies of scale'* are good, (*and by default, 'small' is then not good*), can be challenged in practice (*in communist Russia, didn't the production from the rural dwellers' acre plots outdo the production from the large-scale state farms? - independence, and individual internal motivation might yet prove to be important factors - ?*) As production increases, for instance, so at certain stages must *'production infrastructure'* increase, which costs money and then increases the average unit cost of production, so any idea that increased production/large-scale is an economic cure-all panacea, could be limited if not flawed - ?

As earlier, business consultancy experience certainly suggests that good, efficient, lean overheaded smaller and medium-size outfits can give *'big'* a run for its money, often having the added advantage of *'quick response'* and *'creative solution'* facilities. Maybe the on-going *'big is best'* message has something to do with *'size'* i.e. *'because we're big, we must know best'* - a *'simplistic'* assumption which though, could be limited - ? One of the secondary potential drawbacks of *'large-ism'* - ?

Some experience and knowledge could maybe be useful in terms of differentiating reality and myth. For example, back with the dairy industry, it used to be thought that the *'unimportant'* (*'small equivalent'*) cows were the stale milkers – not giving a lot of milk therefore not deserving of too much attention or inputs - the fresh calvers, the big milkers, being the *'apples of the eye'*. Then, though, there was a change - someone realised that the end of lactation cows – i.e. *'stale'* cows, were more important than the superficial analysis had lead to believe. The freshly calved big-milking cows could not take in the level of feed and hence nutrients needed to sustain their high output – they were *'naturally'* using their body reserves to *'top up'* their nutrition needs, and the better their body reserves, the better they were able to do the topping up, the better then to sustain

their (high) milk outputs. And the time to build good body reserves - ? Yes, when they were 'stale' milkers in their last lactation. 'Small' can , over time, prove to be 'big' - ?

### ' *The max factor ---- ?* '

A further factor from economic theory that could have caused '*distortion*' could have been the economic notion of '*profit maximisation*', which originally could well have been just a factor included in economic modelling, but may have grown (*out of proportion* - ?) into a fixed assumption of modern commercially-orientated life, a further potential '*limitation*' lying in the fact that it can presumably act as a strong conditioning factor within a culture/society.

Some might say that '*it's the way of the world*', '*might is then right*', the '*big and powerful*' (and their '*profit maximisation*' *ethos*), prevail. The counter argument can be, though, that such '*big*' growth is brought about by '*market distortion*' , and at the cost of small firms.

People living independent, self-determining (*within civilised social limits*) life can often tend to behave in a multi-dimensional fashion rather than, say, on a narrower, mainly financial, '*max profits*' track. This real-life multi-dimensional approach (*bringing with it the need for balance between potentially conflicting priorities and experience to be able to effect such balance*) can be seen from a survey (*by this author*) of rural producers with larger independent farm businesses, who collectively identified as many as sixteen key objectives in running their '*lifestyle*' enterprises, with a '*prime*' focus on six '*key*' essential objective areas within which they had to achieve a balance.

### '*No max ----?*'

The most important objective of these rural entrepreneurs wasn't maximising '*profit*' – it was rather '*achieving sufficiency of profit*', quite a different take on profit. This they saw as a '*foundation*' business objective – if they didn't achieve this important '*sufficiency*' level (*and unique to each individual business*), then their enterprises would ultimately fail, and no other objective areas would be fulfilled. Once, though, the '*sufficiency*' level had been achieved (*and often surpassed*), then priorities changed to bring in other important objective area, such as their own interests and satisfactions, family and leisure priorities, capital growth, local social priorities, cash flow priorities (*linked to 'profit sufficiency'*), and, for example, labour force and environmental priorities.

Skill and experience are probably needed to handle the more complex multi-dimensional enterprise situation, but then, the multi-dimensional returns can be considerable – greater even than a focus mainly narrowly on financial returns might be capable of bringing - ?

'*Business/enterprise*' success then also needs to be measured over a range of objectives achievements, rather than just, say, on the narrower financial scale - ?

The range of multi-faceted enterprise objectives and the priorities accorded to them will likely depend on a range of factors, such as the stage of business life, the current financial enterprise performance, the level of security within the business, the economic outlook of the sector, the conditioning/mindsets of the business decision-makers, community considerations and not least, the personal preferences and satisfactions of those involved in the business. Such an array of potentially relevant factors indicates that, although the range and relevance of the various factors will likely be *unique* to each business situation, constraining factors (eg.s social, economic) generally exist, limiting freedom of decision-making.

### **'Freerangin' freedom ---- ?'**

What is, though, 'free' and freedom - ? Is it freedom to do whatever a person wants? Or does that have to be qualified, in that, say, if one individual is *'doing whatever she/he wants'*, but this is impacting negatively on quite a few others, society might deem it necessary to limit the activities of that individual. And although the word *'social'* has seemingly become a somewhat unfashionable word in materialistic-type cultures, presumably potentially seen as interfering with the *'doing whatever is wanted'* mindset, plainly the world is organised into societies, so any rebuttal of *'social effects'* could be a form of *'denial'* - ?

*One South Sea island society solved the individual v. society conundrum quite effectively by encouraging individual effort and enterprise, but with then a society norm being that once an individual reached a certain 'high' level of wealth, they then gave most of it back to the community, to high celebration and acclaim, with the individual concerned achieving coveted 'elder' status.*

'Elder status' would seem to have been made virtually redundant in modern *'youngist'* style western-type cultures, the potential cost of which could then be the denial to society of an appreciable store of *'life experience'* knowledge - ? It would seem reasonable that both individual needs and group (*i.e. society*) needs are relevant and a way to facilitate some sort of balance between the two needs to be gained - ? Would this then be a governing responsibility, working towards a longer-term healthy and productive society – both *'sides'* then not getting *'total'* freedom', but getting enough space to meet a large proportion of their respective needs - ?

The social *'fetters'* could be said to have come off in recent years, resulting in a culture focused strongly on individual gain, wealth and status, with presumably then corresponding weaker emphasis of social priorities, thereby resulting then in an imbalanced culture/society -? (*for instance, the heavy emphasis on individual entrepreneurialism, with what some might say, a resulting weakening emphasis on, say, the more 'social' caring professions - ?*). Such emphasis (*i.e. on individual gain*) hasn't though always worked well for individuals. The accompanying level of commercialisation thrust, with its associated trend of increasing personal credit availability, has reportedly resulted in quite a few individuals getting into financial difficulties, some even losing their homes – a pretty dramatic negative result for them, for instance.

### **'Rosy glow ---- not - ?'**

Perhaps the insight to be gained from any results from the prevailing culture, is that there is such a thing as *'cause and effect'* – how things are organised and happen will have effects down the line, and according to some observers, this area could have been somewhat underdone in the UK in the *'noughties'*, with quite a few examples of things not working out due to lack of anticipation of possible results, particularly if there could be the possibility of a negative aspect to outcomes - ?

*An experienced, rural consultant colleague was asked to do a talk to aspiring young entrepreneurs, giving them some of the benefit of his acquired knowledge .. Things did not go completely swimmingly, though, his young audience giving him a hard time for raising 'negativity' – i.e. the possibility of things not working out as well as expected. His experience, though, told him that things don't always run as expected - there are economic downturns, unexpected weather events, disruptions and so forth which can adversely affect business outcomes. As an experienced campaigner, he also knew that over- positivity was one of the potential pitfalls to successful business planning, in that it could then lead to losing sight of reality, to an essential 'feet on the ground' stance..*

*Banks for instance, on being asked to lend money for potential enterprises, tend to be more impressed and then swayed, if the paper planning includes what they call a 'downside analysis' – what do the potential business outcomes look like if things in actuality prove to be less than 'hunky dory' - ? (for instance, economic downturns, weather, disease and civil unrest disruption are examples of threats to economic performance which can happen beyond the control of individuals).*

In his efforts to try to ward them off potential disaster, he may of course have over-emphasised potential negative results – he hadn't certainly been aware of the level of this group's commitment to '*positivity*'. Older people are sometimes seen as '*grumpies*', but is this because with their experience which probably includes living through relatively hard times and '*downturns*', they can exist in reality, not necessarily having then to see things just in '*rosy glow*' terms - ?

'*Freedom*', then might in reality be more of a relative rather than absolute experience -? The individual decides to accept and live with any restrictions emanating from '*society*', on the basis that such a position still gives them the best longer-term package with which to deal with life, - and also with a '*common sense*' wisdom that '*you can't always get exactly what you want*' - ?

*(this is not to suggest that society's restrictions are always necessarily/ automatically long-term effective).*

### **Government – its role in theory – and in practice - ?**

Currently in 2014 in the UK, it may appear at times that government appears to think that it has to react and act to many of the issues which come forth, often even if they are minority supported, raising the old question as to whether people should mostly be left to get on with it, with central government concentrating then on '*overview*' central necessities such as effective laws, effective '*level playing fields*', effective public services and effective national defence measures, rather than intervening at grass roots levels (*heads of schools in the UK have recently (2014) had discretionary powers removed by government, for instance*). The '*overview*' approach, might for instance also help to generate a clearer picture and to retain a focused view on the governmental role - ?

Consideration of and/or debate to identify the role and scope of central government seems to be relatively scarce these days, as too of associated issues such as the potential importance of local government - ? One of the potential effects of centralised control cultures maybe to subdue people into acquiescence, (*the individual feels 'small and unempowered' against such 'organisational largeness'*), along with the additional point that maybe when things reach a critical level of '*largeness*', small units such as the individual are likely to feel inhibited about expressing views, particularly if they are '*alternative*' - ?

In the face of such '*giantism*', how then can the small '*David*' compete - ? Is there then, too much power and control invested in central government, to the detriment of individual self-status, and to individual motivation, then adding up to a loss of productivity to the culture as a whole, and/or the creation of a non '*individual conducive*' (particularly for the '*freerange*' individual - ?) heavy '*control culture*' in general - ? The philosopher Nietzsche was of the opinion that the independently-minded individual would have '*problems*' with the '*mass culture*', *for instance*.



## ***Against the Trend - ? Why Might 'Small' Yet be Good - ??***

To reiterate and repeat a point from the above sections : it would appear that the '*free market*' might only continue over time to be '*free*' if it retains '*many buyers and sellers*', with none big enough and powerful enough to by its own actions, manipulate the market to its own ends, otherwise it then can become an '*unfree*' market, creating price levels non-reflective of true supply and demand conditions. It has been argued that the latter is the process currently operating within highly competitive, materialistic '*largist*' cultures, and that governments may not have then carried out enough of the '*refereeing/regulating*' role necessary to keep the market '*free*', i.e. maintaining the '*many buyers and sellers*' position, then facilitating a '*large organisation*' dominated market - ? Clearly, big organisations, and '*big*' ( i.e. control-centered) governments exist, with then allied powerful vested interests, which can conflict with longer-term '*earth society*' issues, as maybe can be seen in the environment/climate clash of views, with some - often experts - saying that there's scientific evidence for man's responsibility for environment degradation, others – in denial -? -seemingly unwilling to accept such evidence. (*Prince Charles in the UK has in 2014 been reported as claiming for instance that climate change denial has been lead by 'vested interests'*).

Interestingly, it's the '*free market*' again that's identified as a root cause of some of the conflicts, its detractors pointing to the situation that the current human approach to the '*free market*' has tended to fuel a '*do whatever you want*' attitude via an abandonment of ('*longer-term*') human values and ethics, involving a '*one-dimensional*' short-termist view that it's the '*free-market*' which decides, therefore '*man*' does not '*interfere*' – problematic, though, as above, when the free market becomes '*unfree*' - ?

Some (eg.s Schumacher, Ritzer et al) have argued that modern '*progress*' is akin to a big ball rolling down a hill, unstoppable by any '*normal*' force, and hence with the potential to '*crash*' at some stage (eg. *abnormal weather patterns* - ?). Schumacher had concerns that technology, for instance, whilst a potential boon, needed a '*stop and think*' to consider more its application for '*general mankind good*'. Considering the modern scenario outlined above, (*and the individual's potential vulnerability within it*), this could be unlikely to happen, so maybe this is a situation again in which the individual might need as far as possible, to take their own '*freerange*' reins and do what they can to lead their own responsible, resource-caring, semi-independent lifestyle, giving then a lead to governments and 'big business' – the '*small*' leading the '*big*' - ?

The longer-term concern that large-scale power could have an over-restricting effect on individual freedoms, still, though , possibly/probably remains, along with the fact that if significant large-scale power exists, then by default, '*small*' is likely to be disadvantaged, and possibly worse, (eg. *threats to individual freedoms, free speech*) which is probably why Fritz Schumacher argued that it was important to counteract '*large*' by '*insisting on small*' - ?

Might it be perhaps a pivotal moment in time (early 2014) for individual rights and freedoms to be supported and protected - ? Weren't individual freedoms and rights originally enshrined for the very reason of protecting them from larger, more powerful predators, and aren't such measures the essence and basis of civilised culture - ?? And didn't many suffer for their bravery in fighting for individual right and freedoms, leaving a legacy which should be '*honoured and cherished*' - ?

### ***'Honour for non-thieves --- ?'***

The UK business guru, Charles Handy, has written about the differing forms of individuality. He identified the '*do what you want*', '*fill your boots*' style as emanating from a Reagan/Thatcher

originated 'greed' era, and expressed concerns that such a free-form of individuality without responsibility (*encouraged/amplified by the 'free-market' mantras - ?*) could/would cause problems via encouragement of 'greed without responsibility'. His 'answer' was that individuality was indeed important, but that it needed to be of the responsible, developed variety, which he labelled '*honourable individualism*'.

He might, for instance, have had in mind something akin to Maslow's human needs research which indicated that human needs came in '*stages*' and the current focus of the individual depended on imminent needs, which in turn depended on stage of life, age and experience. Some of these needs, particularly those of the '*more developed*' variety, such as social and self-growth/potential needs, did not necessarily have a direct relationship with money, a key point being that the individual's '*natural*' (eg. '*un-barriered*' by culture conditioning) course could be to develop over time to higher levels of understanding and capabilities, (*and presumably, then, any 'do whatever' type of individuality could be a potential pitfall preventing the fuller development of the individual - ?*).

It could well be true, of course, that '*large*' being '*big and important*', and therefore small '*unimportant and insignificant*' (in '*large's*' eyes), that a power culture run by large, powerful organisations, including governments, is perhaps unlikely to pay over attention to the fuller development needs of the individual; rather the focus is likely to be on the needs and priorities of the '*big*' organisations, whether commercial or governmental. Casting shorter-term economic gain aside for a moment, the valid question could perhaps then become:

*the fuller, latent potential of many/most of its populace is then unlikely to be realised - ?*

Rather than seeking to develop people into their fuller productive potential, the '*largist*' operation can often seemingly be a '*control culture*', which seeks to '*move*' people (*as opposed to gaining natural internal people motivation productivity*), which also can then fill the power needs/desires of those operating the culture. Such control measures can be seen, for instance, in the heavy use of targets in the workplace (*indicating work levels required external to the individual*), the use of peer group pressure as a control mechanism (eg. *league tables*), the reduction in employee rights/power in the workplace (eg. *non-recognition of employee representation*), the introduction of more insecurity into the workplace (egs. *the use of fixed-term contracts, the use of zero-hour contracts*), widening the distribution of wealth (*employees then having to become more focused on existence needs*). One broadsheet UK paper is currently reporting that wealth distribution in the UK has skewed back sharply to the '*few*' becoming exceedingly rich, but with the creation of a significant '*poor*' under-class.

(the headlines: '*Handful of super-rich are wealthier than 12.6m Britons put together*').

Such a control culture can coincide with the '*theory x*' mindset, in which employees are seen as '*naturally lazy and feckless*', and hence control methods are justified.. The alternative view, ('*theory Y*') which arose because a researcher asked the question as to whether the '*theory x*' mindset had actually arisen as a result of negative work attitudes caused by negative work situations (*i.e. people actually weren't 'naturally' lazy – rather the reverse – they 'naturally' were need satisfying mechanisms and were therefore potentially, (i.e. discounting any social conditioning effects) 'naturally industrious'*). Many employment situations undoubtedly operate on this latter basis (*called the 'theory y' mindset*), but possibly because they could often tend to be of the smaller variety, the '*theory y*' approach can maybe tend to get less exposure.

A survey of rural employers, for instance, (*by this author*), pre-selected as competent, effective managers of staff, were found to largely employ the '*theory y*' approach, seeking to establish the

conditions for internal human productive motivation to flourish, which they espoused not only because of its capability to deliver longer-term on-going high people productivity levels to their businesses, but also from their own perspective – it being more enjoyable and satisfying being a 'promoter' of people, then an 'inhibitor' of people, for instance. The theory Y 'motivation management' approach is more individually geared to the needs of individuals, and the priorities those individuals place on them.

Such a theory y approach capable of delivering sustained high employee productivity , and often with less rather than more management input, can stand as a solid further reason why 'small/individual' can be important, in that internal motivation being linked to individual human needs, an effective motivational manager is then likely to need both an understanding, and awareness of such individual needs and priorities.

*P was an engaging character – energetic, humorous and with no side, who owned and ran not only a large farming outfit in the south of the UK, but also a plethora of allied 'diversified' enterprises from the same site – a farm shop, bakery, cafe, industrial lets, office lets, storage facilities, alternative health centre, hairdressers and so forth. His management style was pretty 'hands off, letting his staff run the enterprises and only getting involved if there were problems (not often) or crises (eg. acute staff shortages). His staff appreciated such a management style , appreciably, as they did his warm personal approach. His outfit seemed to run fairly effortlessly with fairly minimal management input, and produced good financial results – as well as much 'people satisfaction'.*

#### ***'Self-responsible professionalism ----- ?'***

*'The way to get a sane, responsible society is to fill it with sane, responsible people' (anon),*

*'it's hard to stay sane in an insane society' ( The Path of Paradox, Osho )*

The writer of the first line above then went on to suggest that the degree of focus on (short-term) 'mega money' making could be both one dimensional and imbalanced, and likely to be one less rather than more carrying adequate responsibility levels. His considerations on this subject area were prompted by initial thoughts on the demise of the importance of organisational religion in western-style materialistically-based cultures. Formerly, he argued, 'God' was held to be responsible, but if 'man' then takes up the reins, doesn't 'man' then have to accept the responsibility for the outcomes of his/her activities and endeavours - ?

*( is 'climate change denial' an indication that 'man' is struggling somewhat with the responsibility side, for instance- ?)*

The control culture could be said to reduce individual professional responsibility , the very 'control' (by central agencies such as governments and employee management of larger firms – heavy use of work targets, for instance) nature of such cultures working against the 'freedom' and space required for a self-motivated, self-responsible professional class to be able to fully operate, implying that the production then of lower levels of individual self-responsibility could be then identified as a limitation of the said 'control culture' - ? The corollary then presumably could apply: i.e. a culture which promotes individual motivation, responsibility and professionalism can then be likely to produce a more long-term effective responsible society – another key potential reason why 'small', 'individual' might yet be important - ?

## **' Function(s) of a society - ?'**

Although '*social*' considerations can appear to be somewhat out of vogue in the free-market culture, plainly societies exist, and are likely to exist, so maybe a productive way forward might be to embrace them and work to discover how they might be organised to be '*long-term effective*' - ? A society could be said to be, at its most basic, a grouping together of people for their mutual benefit – things can, though, '*distort*' and there's then the possibility that some within the society might get more than '*their fair share*', at the expense of others within the same society. Maybe this occurs the more individually '*competitivised*' a society is made to be, heightening personal insecurity and promoting an over '*out-for-self*' type of culture within society - ?

( *interesting, for instance, that as society in the UK became more individually competitive, most of the mutual finance organisations changed into profit seeking commercial outfits - ----* )

*In one small South Sea island community, the (fit and strong) younger males put out to sea to fish, then bringing their catch back to the shore, where it is shared out so that everyone, young or old, get a share. These males get recognition for their contributions and no doubt get internal recognition and satisfaction in being able to play a pivotal, key role in their society .*

Not everyone in '*civilised society*' might be capable of competing, nor in a life position to be able to do so (the elderly, for instance). Some roles in society might not necessarily be best suited by a competitive environment ( *there have been a number of reported cases of 'uncare' for the elderly in retirement/nursing homes in the UK for instance*). It may, then, be over limiting to '*standardise*' a society to suit one particular ideological approach, life and people, as part of nature, being presumably as '*bio-diverse*' as the rest of nature - ?

Individuals could be said to be then bio-diverse, although this may depend, for instance, on the level of '*central control*' within a society, seeking to '*standardise*' systems and people, carrying then with it considerable '*conditioning of people*' power. In so-called '*freeworld*' societies though, individual rights are enshrined in law, so presumably one of the functions of such cultures/societies is to facilitate, and promote/encourage, individual expression , creativity and development, an important function that any strong emphasis on '*organisational large*' could then overshadow and put at risk- ?

To achieve such balance within a society, it could then be important to accord to un-powerful '*small*', for example, individuals, positive '*importance emphasis*', to counteract any physical '*might is right*' powerful '*largist*' effects , supplying another important functional potential reason why '*small*' is of fundamental importance - ?

## **' Harmonic whole ----'**

Society could then be said to be made up of many different, '*biodiverse*' elements. It could be akin to, say, an orchestra, which again consists of many different, contrasting parts, some '*big and loud*', some '*small, delicate and soft*'. To get beauty in the shape of a '*harmonic whole*', ( *a 'civilised' goal, incorporating also more longer-term society stability and security - ?*) each needs to be given its right place so each can perform their relative roles, to produce the desired result. This is achieved by having a '*designer*' (i.e. composer) who produces and organises the potential of the desired harmonic end result, and accords the various differing members (i.e. *instruments*) their respective parts, and then when '*into action*', someone who is accepted and recognised as an organiser and '*referee*', i.e. the conductor. If all happens well, then the end result of '*harmonic beauty*' is gained, out of a diverse range of components ( one of the '*essences*' of civility - ?)

## **'Big' can be beautiful ---- ?**

Maybe a key element that's not always established for society, though, is the *'end result'*, the goal – the *'designer'* role having become obscured - ? And if culture's focused strongly on individual gain, can such a collective objective exist - ? And if it doesn't, does that then run the risk of people only then being able to lead small, *'self-centered'* lives, not then accessing *'bigger'*, *'higher'* territory such as *'beauteous harmonic wholes'* - ?

## **'People mattering ----- '**

Fritz Schumacher's groundbreaking work *Small is Beautiful* was sub-titled *Economics As If People Mattered*. When things become *'large'*, it's relatively easy to see that then *'might'* can become *'right'* and *'small'* then becomes the casualty, and in power terms, there's maybe nothing in society as small as the individual, increasingly dis-empowered the more *'largist'* the culture becomes - ? As has been attempted to show above, there are reasons why *'small'* could though, yet be of importance (eg. *keeping the market 'free'*). What though, of individuals themselves, their development, their growth, their fulfillment ---? (*as against, say, just 'wealth attainment'*). Should the same be a function and aim of a society, of a culture, trying to look beyond any restrictions caused by *'largist'* phenomena such as *'might is right'* - ? And in more functional terms, would it *'pay'* a society to pay attention to individual growth and development, in that *'grown'* people could then well be more productive, well-adjusted, responsible, socially effective ----- - ?

Ruskin, for instance, was of the opinion that a society comprising mainly of *'noble'* people would be desirable, and therefore a good thing to aim at. Presumably by *'noble'* he mean't something like *'developed, honourable responsible people with self-integrity'*, and was seemingly an early seeker on the track of something like Maslow's *'self-actualised man'* - ? (*see later*).

Schumacher himself was an advocate of *'man'* taking a self-responsible *'overview'* approach, urging a *'stop and think'* approach, together with a more planned approach to technological development,

*'so it serves man rather than man becoming its slave'*.

Robert Pirsig in his seminal work *Zen and the Art of Motor-Cycle Maintenance* proposed that individual development (*i.e. striving for 'excellence', which had to be done individually*) had been in effect hijacked by *'organisational largism'*, and in effect the individual then dis-enfranchised, to the detriment of society as a whole, the individual being the *'natural'* guardian and source of *'quality'* in life (*another significant reason as to why the individual is yet important, and highly so - ?*).

Pirsig pointed to *'concrete jungles'* and *'high rise'* twentieth century living conditions as examples of *'over-rationality'*, under-influenced by the *'heart'* dimension, then producing *'inhumane'* living environments, facilitated by organisational power in the form of current culture *'mass'* thinking., influenced in turn by *'largist'* organisational power. Presumably, he might have supported then the devolution of relevant centralised power to more localised democratic (*'freerange'*) forms, to then gain more access to individual *'quality'* influences.

Charles Handy, as earlier, supported individualism but that of the *'honourable, naturally developed'* variety rather than any solely self-gratification *'doing whatever is wanted'* approach. Handy, then,

supported the notion that it's important that people are able to develop along their life journeys, and that they then had the chance to do so – a responsibility of 'collective' society - ?

### ***'People potential ----'***

Abraham Maslow, who reportedly was the first psychologist to investigate 'human psychological health' (as opposed to mental illness), established via research amongst 'psychologically healthy' people that there were a set of human needs that tended to be met or satisfied in an 'ascending' manner. The initial rung of this ladder was immediate survival needs, then progressing through security and social needs to individual development and maximising potential needs, to ultimately produce 'self-actualised man' – humans operating to their full and true potential (and even beyond - ?). Social needs, seemingly 'out of fashion' via the current creeds of 'mass' culture, are a 'mid-range' set of needs according to Maslow, to which some – many? -might subscribe - ? 'Fellow feeling', community spirit, team participation and suchlike might well seem to many as quite natural human feelings and activities , with then focus 'just on self' a limited take on life - ?

Presumably Maslow might well have seen his 'hierarchy of needs' as a useful model, maybe not to be taken, though, over literally. Individual development presumably, for instance, inevitably occurs throughout the individual's life journey – maybe the way to look at Maslow's set of needs is by seeing that particular 'step on the ladder', as the 'priority' needs for that period in time - ?

If then , society's aim is to, say, maximise its potential fulfillment satisfaction – it might be argued that the same would be a sane objective, leading to a sane , peaceful and productive society, experiencing good levels of needs satisfaction - following a Maslow-type format might do the trick, and a reasonably full range of human needs would be recognised and facilitated. Presumably a limitation of the current free market/ individually competitive society model is that being strongly focused on individual gain, other areas such as, say, social needs, fuller personal development, get less of a look-in , with the then risk of creating 'needs barriers' within the system.

Another key potential limitation could be that if the market becomes 'less free' with the creation of powerful organisations capable of 'bending' the market, then this power can be used to exploit weaker areas (eg. individuals as employees) to then disadvantage them and thwart their potential life harvest of needs satisfaction - ? (eg. recent broadsheet reports of large high tech firms acting in collusion to keep employees pay low) Another reason to 'insist on small' - ?

### ***'Higher spheres ----- ?'***

Within his researches Maslow noted the phenomena of 'peak experiences' amongst his subjects, an area the author Colin Wilson became interested in via his contact with Maslow, subsequently writing his *New Pathways in Psychology* work.. Psychologically healthy people were reporting experiences of high intensity, joyousness, well-being and fulfillment. It lead Maslow to question whether there was a higher spiritual type need level that was accessed by the individual via good levels of hierarchical needs satisfaction (he went on to write a further book devoted to this area - *The Farther reaches of Human Nature*). It's reported here and there that some individuals do experience 'higher consciousness' levels of being, in which they report experience of bliss states, freedom from life angsts (literally – 'enlightenment') and 'super' levels of energy, health and well-being, and it seems evident that for many individuals, the spiritual plane is important.

There are movements devoted to helping individuals attain to such higher level frequencies, probably significantly different to conventional energy frequencies, which often appear to involve conflict - ? Some have indicated that the modern identified social trend of 'dumbing

*down*' might be a factor, and that maybe an alternative trend of '*wising up*' might provide more productive longer-term results for society --- and then Ruskin's '*noble society*' becomes more of a possibility – and in which the '*higher plane*' individuals gain, as does then everyone else –?

Might, then, '*small*', in the form of the '*developed*' individual, be yet beautiful – ?

### **Endpiece -----**

*'How canst thou these greater secrets know,  
That dost not know the least thing of them all ?*

*Ill, can he rule the great,  
That cannot reach the small'* (Spenser)

*'Know thyself'* (Socrates)

Trying to get beyond any '*big is best*' mindset barrier, maybe quite a task – how on earth, for instance, can one tiny entity of an individual, a '*David*', know better, say, than a large organisation, a '*Goliath*' - ? On the other hand, it's well-known and accepted that '*bigness*' can lead to '*might is right*' type of mindsets, with then attendant bullying behaviours and '*power abuses*'.

Perhaps '*real*' religion was the traditional defender of the '*small*', now, though, diminished in effect in the west by what some might see as a religious organisation '*largist*' process, complete with its own set of '*might is right*' originated problems (eg. *the reported child abuse problems of the Catholic church*). Individual '*people champions*' do surface – in the UK, Prince Charles could be the most prominent example, for instance.

Considerable contemporary comment appears to be related to what people perceive to be an '*imbalanced*' society. A letter today (feb. '14), for instance, in one of the broadsheet UK papers from eminent politicians, union leaders, arts people and so forth claims that '*liberty remains as precious as ever*' and needs vigilance today as much as at any time. One prominent UK politician was recently reported as stating that currently in the UK, political parties were failing to stand up for the '*ordinary Joe*'. A recent obituary of a major arts figure, for instance, commented on his central belief that a society's state of civilisation was represented by its level of priority towards the arts.

Writers such as Fritz Schumacher and Robert Pirsig have gallantly attempted to argue the case that '*small*' should not be eclipsed by '*large*', for their own sakes but also for the longer-term good of societies themselves. It may be useful to review the potential attributes of '*small*' looked at in the preceding passages.

Is '*small*' needed to? :

- maintain the '*free*' market (*otherwise 'large' emerges to then distort the 'perfect' supply and demand conditions*)
- to achieve high, more sustainable, longer-term workforce

productivity ( *with the health and fulfillment of people as quite a useful by-product ?* )

- to promote '*sociability*' ( *oil of society's engine – ?* ) within society by facilitating/nourishing the social needs of individuals
- to allow'/promote '*biodiversity of people*' to maximise '*people productivity and creativity*' to benefit of society as a whole
- to help produce a *responsible society* via the developed responsibility levels of its constituent people
- to effect '*balance*' (and '*security*') within society, particularly by representation of '*quality*', and hence contribute to the '*harmonic whole*', '*civilised culture*'
- to divert any '*largism*' threat to western world '*freedom of the individual*' rights
- to be able to contribute to the possible society aim of achieving '*max satisfaction/fulfillment*' of society
- to access Maslow-type '*higher human needs*' to develop a fuller developed and potentially more '*holistically*' productive populace
- to enable/facilitate the attainment of possible '*higher consciousness*' levels, which might prove socially useful/productive in a longer-term

There seem, then to be quite a few potential reasons why it might yet '*pay*' a society to gain the fuller development of its constituent members, and in so doing demonstrate real respect and care for them. One of the prospective hurdles such a society might have to surmount is that of what economists have called the '*money veil*', implying that money, and the pursuit of it, can have the capability of obscuring the reality lying behind it.

*'Yer know what ah thinks, me boy? Ah thinks money be a good servant, but a bad master',*

as one old boy West Dorset UK farmer intoned quite a few years ago now, looking over the gate at ] his gorgeous herd of creamy brown Ayrshire cattle he'd built up from scratch, contentedly grazing in an emerald-green field of grass – a sight for sore eyes.

Might he, though, have had something - ? Money after all was '*invented*' to facilitate exchange of goods and services between people (eg. *A's thatching services don't easily equate to B's bootmaking services*), the reality being the exchange of goods and services, allowing specialisation of skills and roles – money being then just a medium - ?



Maybe it could help to take the view after all, that money is the '*means*', rather than the '*end*' - ?