

Dear Friends,

I am writing this letter to you from a number of semi-conscious notes tapped on my smartphone, typically written between 4am and 5am and then found later in the week when looking back at my notes. I trust myself most in the morning, before I have fully woken up, before my clothes and layers get added back onto me, before I leave my hut and engage with the world and its demands! My digital presence is primarily for people who wish to understand my professional past, but this letter is from my heart, to share with you the most honest words I can find about what on earth I think is going on and to see if we might respond together to create our future.

Beauty & Justice

In John Rawls thought experiment he asks us to imagine if we didn't know where in the world we were going to be born or into what situation, what kind of world would we like to have? It's a good experiment to consider the basis for beauty and justice. What these words have in common is their etymological roots of fairness. I had forgotten when I began to look for these about how we used to talk about the fairest of the fair to describe beauty. I believe that something that is fair takes up no more and no less space than what it rightfully deserves - something that is in essence, thriving and flourishing, not a light held under a bucket, but also not a flame devouring everything in sight. A flame at its right size, its right temperature, using up its right amount of resources. Creating light and heat in its rightful way, doing its fair work in the environment.

The exploration of beauty and justice, is not something that necessarily goes well, hand in hand with our daily work, with the doings of life. The business of the rigmarole of getting the kids to school, finding our parking space, watching love island, scrolling on Facebook. Beauty and justice are issues of the soul, things which require deep consultation to find. And I think in the modern life we have lost our office, we have lost the seat of being, the realm of contemplation and I think we need it back.

I think we are in an ontological crisis in a world led by scientific, cognitively taxing evidence based thinking, we are struggling to live through our minds, denying our hearts feelings and our senses, essentially denying what it means to be human. We need to find a place for our whole being to thrive and flourish.

The Woods

I have found a glimpse of that place in the woods and I am not alone; the Japanese have found that 'Shinrin-Yoku' has dramatic effects on people's physiology. The trees share with us their wisdom of ecology and their oxygen, they shelter us from the hot beating sun, and protect us from the bitter cold and winds. They are here for us, they are our living chapel and I have found great comfort and solitude amongst them. They provide a space in the margins for us to get slightly outside the daily grind. A space to consider our lives, consider beauty and justice, to

consider what it means to be, to feed our ontological experience and consider our place in this crazy world!

The Three Great Challenges

Artificial Intelligence

We are going through a step in epistemological evolution, the very nature of reality is being expanded into a machine realm beyond biological constraints. This work is most obviously evidenced by deep minds, tabula rasa neural network, alpha go superceding 4000 years of human knowledge on the most complex finite game in human history within 24 hours, given only the rules of the game! and by boston dynamics recent robotic developments creating spot, with soother moves that recent exploits from politicians. On both intelligence and movement, machines are fast approaching human level and will quickly pass! If you believe ray kurzweil we will hit a strong general point of singularity around the year 2045

Environmental Crisis

In the UK, the rural soil is being so intensely farmed that experts belief we have fewer than 100 harvests remaining and we have 2 degrees of temperaure rise, only 410 bn tonnes of carbon dioxide left, we need to reduce to 41bn per year which is less than 50% of our current usage!

Homes for Refugees

Everybody deserves a home, and much as a butterflies presence is evidence of ecological diversity and health, the opposite is true about the health of our systems if we cannot find rights and homes for refugees. How many, and how we treat refugees refugees is a litmus test for how well we are getting on a globe towards our future. We currently have 60 million displaced refugees around the world, currently the same as UK population. By 2050 we are expecting around 200 million - same as France, Germany and UK

As we move forwards into a space dominated by machine intelligence, changed unrecognisably by environmental crises, where we are forced to deal with unprecedented levels of worklessness and placelessness, we have to arm ourselves with the ability to grapple with uncertainty, to fluidly and dynamically engage in a way that we never have had to before, to enquire deeply about our relationship with the unknown, for only a robust relationship will allow us to cope with the crashing waves of change we will face in the next 30 years let alone the next century

A healthy relationship with the unknown lays the foundations for the bravery required to help design the kind of structures that will be able to deal with the upcoming waves of change. Let's learn from the trees to be strong yet agile to sway and go with the flow, but to trust that our roots will give us grounded and resilient.

A Question?

The enquiry which occupied most of my time in the year spent in the woods in various different manifestations is best summarised as '**what is real?**' and '**what is really going on in reality?**'

This raw question swirled through my mind at an existential level, a social level and at an internal personal level, asking 'what is god?' 'What is a good life?' 'What is the nature of me?' As I raised at an institutional level, this line of questioning prompted one idea that I cannot forget and one simple tool which helps me to engage with it and respond to the question at all its levels

Beyond the Nation State

We DO live in a global world, and every sector of our lives has evolved to join this global structure, other than our political systems so no matter how uncomfortable it is I believe we have to find a way to successfully bridge the gap between the paradigm of national hierarchy to a connected global network. We need to respect the cultural importance of nations in our history but to systematically create a move of power towards a global grassroots network. To do this successfully, the nature of the structure has to be different because otherwise we end up with dangerous national leaders achieving too much centralised power, we cannot mix the archaic national hierarchy and the power of our global technology . If we do not successfully create a system that engages and distributes power to the collective then those less privileged will continue to suffer, refugees will continue to live without home and our environment will collapse. We can't afford to do that, we can't afford to keep creating outsiders. We must create a system can release the pressure we are experiencing in our society right now due to having an inappropriate set of tools for the job.

We need a world of symbiosis of mutual relationships. a network that is densely connected, not just hierarchically managed. we are unlikely to find inspiration in the systems that we have built, the linear systems that we have built in the last 200 years, predicated on the industrialist efficiency through uniformity thinking, bound by economics and IQ, powered by the steam engine. These tools at best were fit for the day, at worst were criminal but they will not see us through the challenges that we have to face. In a world finding progress through through thinking power uniformity school uniforms made sense, but in a world requiring diversity what would be the best things to ask our children to wear?

The Swiss Army Knife of Intelligence

The tool for our collective future

To update our operating system we need to update our thinking and at the core of any system is understanding its engagement with its environment, in other words its potential for intelligence.

How we think about intelligence powers our societal paradigm, The lens through which we looked at intelligence was fitting for both the tools we had available and the way we were trying to organise ourselves at the time. It is not fitting for the world we find ourselves in today. Our concept of intelligence needs to accommodate all forms, emotional, and cognitive, machine, in machine and biology looking to all our diverse expressions so that we don't miss out on the range of talents that we get from peculiar minds that can do incredibly peculiar things. We need to encourage a philosophy of intelligence founded on diversity, founded on an understanding of its emergent and relational nature.

We are each responsible to look at ourselves, our families and the world around us and ask what is the most appropriate response to this world that I can make? This idea of going beyond nation state and this tool of intelligence as a superconcept are things that I have got to work on and if I don't do that then I don't know what the fuck I am doing as if we do not attend to our garden there will not be air for our children to breathe

Friends

Along with a number of friends, I don't believe that the biggest problems in our world can be addressed by the current system let alone the current parties, and the work needing to be done to make us fit for the future looks more like a network and less like a hierarchy.

My personal focus is on the flow of a system: finding out where the gaps are, how different parts connect and how we measure the flow between the system and its environment. Intelligence has always been at the heart of our human story. It has created all our tools and narrative, it is what has helped us survive. Intelligence is at the core of who we are. If we are to cope with our current environment, we need to reimagine the concept of intelligence. That is why I am working on intelligence flow, a method that can help us integrate on an individual level, machines and biology, health care and education, embracing neurodiversity, and accounting for our relational and emergent nature. Intelligence is like A Swiss Army Knife to help us deal with this unprecedented future.

I am surrounded by friends who inspire me to keep focused on beauty and justice, and their roots of fairness. These friends bring their expertise and creativity to the fore, helping us to learn and grow. Together we try to keep the values of diversity, dependence, being and emergence at the heart of our response

For our sanity, for our purpose, for our thriving, for our families, for our children, for our joy, for our souls we need to get together and create a space outside of the system we have been handed, a part of our lives which lives outside of the market, which lives outside of scientific logic that cannot be quantified, that cannot be qualified, that we scarcely dare to find language or shape or form to describe for the reverent understanding that as we do so we limit it. It is in this space we can re-imagine what it means to co-create

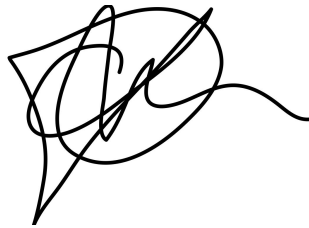
We are ill equipped. We are few. But we must begin to try, to engage with the challenges that we face by creating these, unauthored spaces in our lives.

When we look back at our lives we will ask **How did we choose to engage? What did we choose to put our attention to? What did we choose to sell? What did we choose to create? Who did we choose to love? What did we worship?** As we prepare to return to the river of being, a cup of water poured back to the eternal stream, these questions will run on repeat across my mind and I am hope that I will have have memories of responses that I have made towards them

So come all you weary, come you tired of heart, come you bruised by life, come you cracked from the drought, come you lonely and stuck. Come and bask in the beauty, bathe in the forest, allow nature and the unknown to fill you up to over flowing, to remind you who you are. Come home

Much love,

Your friend
Dave

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Dave', written in a cursive style with a long tail stroke.

8th Oct 2018

Further reading :

Rawls Thought experiment :

<https://andreascluth.org/2009/10/28/the-veil-of-ignorance-another-great-thought-experiment/>

Essay on Scarry Beauty & Justice : Fairness :

<https://repository.usfca.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1154&context=usflawreview>

Alpha Go : <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tXIM99xPQC8>

Spot the Robot : <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kHBcVIqpvZ8>

Singularity :

<http://www.kurzweilai.net/futurism-ray-kurzweil-claims-singularity-will-happen-by-2045>

Crop Rotations :

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/britain-facing-agricultural-crisis-as-scientists-warn-there-are-only-100-harvests-left-in-our-farm-9806353.html>

UN Climate warning :

<http://www.un.org/en/sections/issues-depth/climate-change/>

Climate refugees :

<https://reliefweb.int/report/world/climate-migrants-might-reach-one-billion-2050>

We need to go on a 10 year diet, a decade long operating system update