

The Future of Business in a Technological Age

Session 5: Un-commodifying the World

27th April 2019

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Briefly: If “commodification” is “to buy and sell a thing without reference to its meaning or context” (Postman), how can we re-insert meaning and context into business?

Less briefly: This talk aims to understand the relational order. How do we relate to God, to each other, and to the world around us? Business is often blind to relational factors. (If business exists to maximise profits, it fosters relationship only if that is a by-product of maximising profits.) Techno-values are often antithetical to relational factors. (Relationships is slow, inefficient, and hard to quantify: everything that technology excises.) Now aware of these issues, how do we go forward in our thinking about business and business technology?

It is not possible to divorce the material aspects of life from wider questions encompassing people, nature, and God. Bricks and mortar, for example, are never just bricks and mortar: they have meaning, significance, and purpose; assigned both by humans and by God. In any given situation, there therefore exist multiple, incommensurate goods. Optimising one (such as profit, or speed) without consideration of the others is simple, and entirely misses the necessary complexity of the situation. In plotting a course forward, we must wrestle with the fact that simultaneously optimising, or at very least considering, multiple incommensurate goods is difficult, and nonetheless necessary.

Readings:

- John Dyer (2011) “Chapter 11. Virtualization” in John Dyer, *From the Garden to the City: the redeeming and corrupting power of technology* (pp. 159-174). Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel.
- Daniel Russ and Mark Sargent (2006) “Chapter 9: Moral Imagination as a Christian Institution” in Douglas Henry and Michael Beaty (Eds.) *Christianity and the Soul of the University: faith as foundation for intellectual community* (pp. 145-162). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic.
- David Harvey (2019) “David Harvey's Anti-Capitalist Chronicles: The Value of Everything” D@W, 19th Feb. 2019 <https://youtu.be/32m7kcv08q8>.
- Amanda Ruggeri (2019) “Why ‘worthless’ humanities degrees may set you up for life” *BBC Website*, 2nd Apr. 2019 <https://bbc.in/2TZpptO>.



LEUNG Wing Tai has had an education spanning science, theology, media, management, and communication. He has a PhD in Communication (Regent); Master of Fine Arts in Cinema-Television (University of Southern California); MTS in Christianity & Society (Gordon-Conwell Seminary); MA in Radio-TV-Film (Bowling Green State U); and a BSc in Physics-Chemistry (HKU). Dr Leung has demonstrated a life-long commitment to cultivate values and worldviews among youths and leaders, through the media and higher education. He served in (and later became the Head of)

Breakthrough, a youth-culture organization. He currently serves as the founding President of Lumina College, a Christian higher education institute.



Mike BROWNNUTT obtained his first Master's degree (MSci in physics) and his PhD (in experimental quantum mechanics) from Imperial College London. Following this he moved to Innsbruck, Austria, for eight years, firstly as a post-doctoral researcher and later as an Assistant Professor. He wrote his habilitation based on his research there, which centred on developing scalable architectures for quantum computers. Throughout this work he held an abiding interest in the relationship between science and religion. He completed his second Master's degree (MA in theology from the University of Chester) considering how

faith is understood by various parties in discourse on the relationship between Christianity and science. Since 2015 he has worked at the University of Hong Kong, where he is Associate Director of the *Faith and Science Collaborative Research Forum*.