

Whitehead, Jack ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9644-0785> (2021) A review of Maxwell, N. (2021) The world in crisis - and what to do about it: a revolution for thought and action [book review]. Educational Journal of Living Theories, 14 (2). pp. 83-89.

Downloaded from: <http://insight.cumbria.ac.uk/id/eprint/7000/>

Usage of any items from the University of Cumbria's institutional repository 'Insight' must conform to the following fair usage guidelines.

Any item and its associated metadata held in the University of Cumbria's institutional repository Insight (unless stated otherwise on the metadata record) may be copied, displayed or performed, and stored in line with the JISC fair dealing guidelines (available [here](#)) for educational and not-for-profit activities

provided that

- the authors, title and full bibliographic details of the item are cited clearly when any part of the work is referred to verbally or in the written form
 - a hyperlink/URL to the original Insight record of that item is included in any citations of the work
- the content is not changed in any way
- all files required for usage of the item are kept together with the main item file.

You may not

- sell any part of an item
- refer to any part of an item without citation
- amend any item or contextualise it in a way that will impugn the creator's reputation
- remove or alter the copyright statement on an item.

The full policy can be found [here](#).

Alternatively contact the University of Cumbria Repository Editor by emailing insight@cumbria.ac.uk.

A review of Maxwell, N. (2021). *The World in Crisis – and what to do about it: A revolution for thought and action.* London: World Scientific.

Jack Whitehead

Jack Whitehead

University of Cumbria, UK.

ORCID NUMBER

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9644-0785>

Copyright: © 2021 Whitehead.
This is an open access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution Non-Commercial License, which permits unrestricted non-commercial use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited.

Maxwell analyses differences between knowledge-Inquiry and wisdom-Inquiry in relation to the revolution of thought and action in what to do about the world in crisis. His focus on creating a co-operatively rational world makes his book of particular interest to those, like me, concerned to create educational knowledge that contributes to the flourishing of Humanity.

Maxwell has organized his book into the following seven chapters:

- (i) The World Crisis; ii) The Key to the Disasters of Our Time: Two Great Problems of Learning; iii) The Profound Enlightenment Idea and Its Bungled Implementation; iv) The Key to the Solution of the World Crisis We Face; v) How Can Wisdom-Inquiry Help Us To Solve the World Crisis?; vi) How Can We Create Wisdom Inquiry?; vii) What do we Need to Do to Solve the World Crisis?

Maxwell lists what he considers are the world crises that need to be addressed. He distinguishes between 'knowledge-inquiry' and 'wisdom-inquiry' in two great problems in learning. He believes what he has called 'knowledge-inquiry' has been successful to enable humans to learn about the universe, and about ourselves and other forms of life as a part of the universe. However, he argues that knowledge-inquiry has failed in enabling us to learn how to create a genuinely civilized, enlightened, wise world. He offers 'wisdom-inquiry' as a way of solving the second great problem of learning.

Maxwell puts forward an argument that, what he calls, 'wisdom-inquiry' is of use to those seeking to clarify what he claims to be a profound misunderstanding concerning the nature of reason. For Maxwell this includes a distinction between what he calls the 'Traditional' Enlightenment' and what he calls the "Profound' Enlightenment'. He describes what he sees as three blunders in the Traditional Enlightenment and explains how these can be overcome through wisdom-inquiry.

In Traditional Enlightenment knowledge, Maxwell argues, is acquired and once acquired, it can be applied to help solve social problems and promote human welfare. Maxwell acknowledges the immense successes and benefits of the Traditional Enlightenment. But, says Maxwell, these immense successes and benefits have been achieved by putting into practice an idea that is very seriously defective and is influential in contributing to the world in crisis. The defect is the idea that, by means of modern science and technology, we can achieve health and happiness. Maxwell claims that the great defect of the Traditional Enlightenment is that whilst it may contain the solution to the first great problem of learning, it does not contain the solution to the second one.

Maxwell refers to the battle between the Traditional Enlightenment and the Romantic opposition that continues to be fought. He claims that the Traditional Enlightenment has defects in its rationality that are responsible for the genesis of our global problems. He argues that in some respect, Romanticism is more rational than the Traditional Enlightenment. But, he says that the defects are responsible for our global problems. Wisdom-inquiry, Maxwell claims, offers a synthesis of traditional Rationalist and Romantic ideas as a great improvement over both.

In overcoming what he labels as the three blunders in the Traditional Enlightenment Maxwell proposes a new conception of science that he claims can be generalized to form an aim-improving, progress-achieving conception of rationality. He advocates the transformation of social inquiry and the humanities to get this new conception of rationality into the fabric of social life. Maxwell presents two arguments he claims put matters right. The first appeals to a 'problem-solving' conception of rationality. The second to an 'aim-improving' conception, arrived at by generalizing the aim-improving conception of what he sees as scientific method, an aim-orientated empiricism that needs to replace standard empiricism. This aim-orientated empiricism, Maxwell claims, is grounded in an aim-orientated rationality.

For Maxwell the object of his book is to make a contribution towards changing the overall aims and methods, the intellectual and institutional structure, of what constitutes academic inquiry. He gives priority to the fundamental problem of realizing what is of value in life as we live. Maxwell is clear that he believes the first task necessary to promote wisdom-inquiry is to create a high-profile campaign devoted to creating awareness of the urgent need to transform universities, so that knowledge-inquiry becomes wisdom-inquiry.

Maxwell says we do not need powerful explanatory theories in social science to grapple successfully with unforeseen undesirable consequences of radical social change. Rather, what he says we need is the social capacity to engage in large-scale, public, cooperative action. That, he claims, makes possible a kind of social learning, a capacity to adjust socially in a flexible and relatively painless way to new, unforeseen circumstances, to an extent that he believes is quite impossible given any other approach.

Maxwell concludes that wisdom-inquiry should seek to promote a cooperatively rational world. Maxwell insists:

Every university should be encouraged to create a symposium, open to everyone at the university, that meets regularly and explores questions about how the university needs to change to become actively engaged in helping the public take steps towards solving global problems.

At once the question arises: How is such a campaign to be created in the first place? That seems to me to be a crucial issue. I have been (115) struggling to get such a campaign up and running for over 40 year, and so far I have failed.... (116)... But what is lacking is a group effort to transform university institutions so that such work is recognized and rewarded – or at least a group effort to get into the public domain the idea that such institutional change is urgently needed (122)

What use might Maxwells idea of wisdom-inquiry be to practitioners engaged in Living Educational Theory Research?

In Living Educational Theory Research, practitioner-researchers explore the implications of asking, researching and answer questions of the kind, 'How do I improve what I am doing in living my values as fully as possible?'. They generate and share evidence-based explanations of educational influences in their own learning, in the learning of others and in the learning of social formation that influence their lives, work and research.

The following ideas from wisdom-inquiry may be of use to practitioners engaged in Living Educational Theory Research. Wisdom-inquiry generalizes the progress-achieving methods of science so that they may be fruitfully applicable to any worthwhile problematic endeavour, such as the inquiry, 'How do I improve what I am doing in living my values as fully as possible?' One such progress achieving method is the use of action-reflection cycles used in scientific inquiries. This method of problem solving involves:

- (i) Clarifying a values-laden question of the kind, 'How do I improve my professional practice?' or 'How do I improve this process of education here?'
- (ii) Imagining possible solutions,
- (iii) Choosing one possibility in an action plan,
- (iv) Acting and gathering data to make a judgement on the educational influences in the learning of a social formation, and those who form it, to contribution to the flourishing of humanity of the actions,
- (v) Evaluating the effectiveness of the actions with respect to the values of human flourishing which emerge in the course of the research,
- (vi) Modifying the question, plan and action in the light of the evaluation;
- (vii) Generating and sharing an evidence-based, validated, values-laden explanation of educational influences in one's own learning, in the learning of others and in the learning of the social formation that influences practice and understanding.

Wisdom-inquiry may be of use to Living Educational Theory Research In seeing the process of validation, as a progress-achieving method of science. For example, Living

Educational Theory Research draws on Popper's (1975, p.44) insights that objectivity is grounded in intersubjective testing. We can enhance the objectivity of living-educational-theories through the mutual rational controls of critical discussion. This process of validation includes questions to be asked of validation group of some 3-8 peers. In a validation group a researcher's explanation of educational influence is subject to questions that are influenced by Habermas' (1976, pp. 2-3) ideas on communication and the evolution of society:

- How can I improve the comprehensibility of my explanation?
- How can I strengthen the evidence I use to justify my assertions or the claims to knowledge I make in my explanation?
- How can I deepen and extend my sociohistorical and sociocultural understandings of their influence in my explanation?
- How can I enhance the authenticity in my explanation in terms of demonstrating that I am living as fully as possible the values I claim to hold?

The contribution of Living Educational Theory Research to wisdom- inquiry

The contributions of Living Educational Theory Research to Wisdom-Inquiry are:

- (i) The acceptance of educational responsibility as a global citizen in living values of human flourishing as fully as possible.
- (ii) Overcoming a limitation in printed text-based representations of knowledge-inquiry (Maxwell, 2021) related to life-affirming energy-flowing, values-laden explanations of educational influences into improving practice. This contribution can be understood in relation to propositional, dialectical and inclusional or living logics. It can be understood through the use of digital visual data from practice, in clarifying the meanings of the embodied values that practitioner-researchers use to judge improvements in their practice and to explain their educational influences in learning.
- (iii) Holding oneself to account in contributing to the generation of a cooperatively rational world. (Maxwell, 2021, p. 156) through generating and sharing one's living-educational-theory with a life-affirming energy and values of human flourishing.

The acceptance of educational responsibility, as a global citizen, in living values of human flourishing as fully as possible

I believe that Living Educational Theory Research can contribute to Wisdom-inquiry through the acceptance of educational responsibility by citizen-scholars to generate and share their living-educational-theories as explanations of their educational influences in learning with values of human flourishing.

For example, one such citizen-scholar is Marie Huxtable. Huxtable (2021) presented her research on 'The Contribution of Educational Conversations to the flourishing of humanity to the 2021 Action Research Network of the Americas (ARNA) Conference with the theme of 'Co-creating knowledge and empowering communities'. You can access the Power-

Point slides for this presentation at <https://tinyurl.com/4hd2frky>. Huxtable stresses the importance of educational conversations in the generation of living-educational-theories with values of human flourishing. It is these educational conversations that I am claiming are contributing to wisdom-inquiry.

You can also access the presentations in the Symposium on 10th April at the 2021 Conference of the American Educational Research Association (AERA) on Accepting Responsibility with Jacqueline Delong (Canada), Jack Whitehead (UK), Shivani Mishra (India), Michelle Vaughan (USA) and Parbati Dhungana (Nepal). These are accessible from: <https://www.actionresearch.net/writings/aera21/2021aerasymposiumfull.pdf>

The presentations show the acceptance of educational responsibility, as citizen scholars (Harper, et al. 2020) and global citizen, by the contributors in living values of human flourishing as fully as possible.

The texts I draw on to illustrate my understanding of living global citizenship are:

Coombs, S., Potts, M. & Whitehead, J. (2014) International Educational Development and Learning through Sustainable Partnerships, Living Global Citizenship.

Potts, M. (2012) How can I live my life as a living-global-citizen? From action research to political activism.

As you will see above, Mark Potts' paper on living-global-citizen has been published in EJOLTs.

These are the kinds of contributions I have in mind when I claim that Living Educational Theory Research can contribute to wisdom-Inquiry.

Overcoming a limitation in printed text-based representations of knowledge-inquiry (Maxwell, 2021) related to life-affirming energy-flowing, values-laden explanations of educational influences into improving practice

This limitation can be understood in relation to propositional, dialectical and inclusional or living logics (Whitehead & Rayner, 2009). It can be understood, through the use of digital visual data from practice, in clarifying the meanings of the embodied values that practitioner-researchers use to judge improvements in their practice and to explain their educational influences in learning (Whitehead & Huxtable, 2006a & b).

The limitations of printed text-based representations of educational inquiries can be clearly seen in the differences between the multi-media presentation, by Whitehead and Huxtable (2006a) on the co-creation of living standards of judgement, at the 2006 World Congress of the Action Learning, Action Research Association. The distortion of this presentation required in fulfilling the requirements of a printed text for publication in the conference proceedings is illustrated by the difference between these two texts:

Whitehead, J. & Huxtable, M. (2006a) How are we co-creating living standards of judgement in action-researching our professional practices?

Whitehead, J. & Huxtable, M. (2006b) How are we co-creating living standards of judgement in action-researching our professional practices

I am claiming that the presentation of multi-media explanations of educational influences in learning enable the embodied expressions of energy-flowing values to be comprehending in a way that adds meaning to what can be communicated through printed texts such as that published by Maxwell (2021). It is these meanings, communicated with the help of digital visual data in EJOLTs, that I am claiming can make a contribution to wisdom-inquiry in the creation of a cooperatively rational world.

Holding oneself to account in contributing to the generation of a cooperatively rational world, (Maxwell, 2021, p. 156) through generating and sharing one's living-educational-theory with a life-affirming energy and values of human flourishing

I identify with the way that Delong holds herself accountable:

One of the basic tenets of my philosophy is that the development of a culture for improving learning rests upon supporting the knowledge-creating capacity in each individual in the system. Thus, I start with my own. This thesis sets out a claim to know my own learning in my educational inquiry, 'How can I improve my practice as a superintendent of schools?' (DeLong, 2002, Abstract)

My purpose in reviewing the ideas of others is to extract valuable insights in my educational inquiry, 'How am I improving my practice in contributing to the generation of a cooperatively rational world?'. In contributing to the educational influence of Living Educational Theory Research in Wisdom-Inquiry and in a cooperatively rational world, in making public this review, I am asking for your responses that could help me to improve my practice and improve my knowledge-creation and sharing of my living-educational-theory. I hope that this review has captivated your imagination in a way that is encouraging you to do something similar in improving your practice in contributing to the creation of a more cooperatively rational world with values of human flourishing.

References

- Coombs, S., Potts, M. & Whitehead, J. (2014) *International educational development and learning through sustainable partnerships, Living Global Citizenship*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- DeLong, J. (2002) *How can I improve my practice as a superintendent of schools and create my own living educational theory?* PhD Thesis, University of Bath. Retrieved December 16, 2021, from <https://www.actionresearch.net/living/delong.shtml>
- Habermas, J. (1976) *Communication and the evolution of society*. London: Heinemann.
- Harper, S. R., David, L. P., Jenkins, R. S. & Soodjinda, D. (2020) *Accepting educational responsibility: 2021 Annual Meeting Theme*. Retrieved December 16, 2021, from <https://www.aera.net/Events-Meetings/2021-Annual-Meeting/2021-AnnualMeeting-Program-Information/2021-Annual-Meeting-Theme>
- Popper, K. (1975) *The logic of scientific discovery*, London: Hutchinson & Co.
- Maxwell, N. (2021). *The world in crisis – and what to do about it: A revolution for thought and action*. London: World Scientific.

-
- Potts, M. (2012). How can I live my life as a living-global-citizen? From action research to political activism. *Educational Journal of Living Theories*, 12(2), 20-33. Retrieved December 16, 2021, from <https://ejolts.net/node/347>
- Whitehead, J. & Rayner, A. (2009) *From dialectics to inclusionality: A naturally inclusive approach to educational accountability*. Retrieved December 16, 2021, from <https://www.actionresearch.net/writings/jack/arjwdialtoIncl061109.pdf>
- Whitehead, J. & Huxtable, M. (2006a). *How are we co-creating living standards of judgement in action-researching our professional practices?* Multi-media text presented at the World Congress of ALARPM and PAR 21-24 August 2006 in Groningen. Retrieved December 16, 2021, from <https://www.actionresearch.net/writings/jack/jwmh06ALARPMmulti.pdf>
- Whitehead, J. & Huxtable, M. (2006b). *How are we co-creating living standards of judgement in action-researching our professional practices?* Printed text in the Conference Proceedings of the World Congress of ALARPM and PAR 21-24 August 2006 in Groningen. Retrieved December 16, 2021, from <https://www.actionresearch.net/writings/jack/jwmhalarpmttext06.pdf>