

The Day Work Ended

Trying to predict the future is like trying to drive down a country road at night with no lights while looking out the back window.

Peter F. Drucker (1909–2005)

It's a wet day in late February 2059, and I'm looking out at the last withering blooms of the daffodils on our Scottish riverbank. I have just seen the biggest spring salmon—20 kilos at least, and no longer rare, jump in mid-stream. The light that filters on to the wooden desk that I made myself in craft class, is radiating through translucent energy-saving roof tiles designed to capture and convert thermal energy from the sun. A log fire is burning in the stove. I can afford the carbon offset.

I'm sitting in my fishing hut, writing some notes on recyclable intelligent Wallpaper™ that converts and translates sentences in a corrected format on to my personal log. The predictive phrasing has long ago learned my style, which is somewhat tiresome, to the extent that I change my words constantly to inject some unpredictability. But soon this too becomes predictable and the system tries to second-guess my diversions. Some of its second-guesses are far better than my first so I let them stay. There's an irritating smugness about this "app," a name that has stuck for any software application. I disabled its status update feature when on three days running it wrote, "Richard is feeling down" in my facelog. The mixture of impertinence and banality was too much to bear.

The log is divided into two sections: the first is a personal area where I store my living accounts, financial details, birth record, health data, academic and practical qualifications. It also includes my career history except that it is no longer called a CV or resume, merely "life details." People don't have careers now; they have lives. The second section is public—where I will be presenting my e-book *The Day Work Ended* when I'm ready to take outside input and feedback after draft publication.

Both sections are displayed on the Wall. The Wall, originally, was a video screen running the height and length of the room where we could interact with daily life globally. Conversations, meetings, games, reading, viewing, feeling, all take place on the Wall. Walls can be placed anywhere there is a surface, ideally flat. Some people run them in their ceilings and some—the fanatics—have rooms with multiple Walls bombarding their senses—but these are becoming rare because of the need to conserve energy. The great thing about the Wall, possibly its singled greatest redeeming feature, is that it can and must be switched off. The off button has become one of the most important interventions in daily life, where individuals can assert their independence at the flick of a switch.

Before the international transition laws associated with Peak Oil, health advisors—or, more accurately, their programs—recommend at least eight hours a day, beyond our sleeping hours, away from the Wall, even longer for young children. Longer periods could be spent on Wall time but this incurred surcharges to health premiums among insurers who monitor everyone's Wall use. They could do that because in 2039 we gave Admin the mandate to store our DNA identities through popular vote in the People's Parliament.

The Peak Oil transitions changed everything, however, leading to wall power reductions.¹ Walls grew, then shrank and in some homes disappeared all together as we tried to adjust to lower energy levels. Many people grab self-generated Wall time, using exercise bikes or communicate on the go. We're creating the fittest generation, mentally and physically that we have ever known. Who said that manual labor was dead? Today it's all the rage and we're loving it. Everyone is busy making things and repairing things. There's a wall slogan to deter consumerist tendencies: "think before you throw."

Some people—the obsessives—operate Wall banks, storing up Wall time through extended breaks, but health insurers will still penalize financially any Wall time of more than 10 hours at one stretch. Wall life is quite different from our "out hours" as we call them. The out hours are spent viewing and chatting, traveling, creating and fixing things, or doing whatever takes our fancy. The term "Social Walling" adopted in the early days has become

meaningless. Social life is simply part of what happens on the Wall and beyond. Walling is fine but the advantages of the sustainability imperative and less long-haul travel means that there are so many people to meet in the local community. We have a blacksmith in our village and she's always busy.

Some, particularly the youth, will activate their Skin screens—skin-grafted video displays called Wallets, utilizing artificial digital flesh, powered by body movement—but mostly only for brief, casual use. You don't go outside and start Walling socially; it defeats the object. People do it and some people tolerate it, but it undermines social protocols that have grown in importance over the past 30 years.

I've given up real travel, apart from short journeys, preferring to go places on the Wall now. I still go shopping in the touch centers, supported by my artificial knees, but it's not quite the same as it used to be. There are advisors who tell you about the food and the weekly bargains and you can touch what you buy. In fact that's how you buy most mass-market foodstuff. Once touched it is removed robotically from display and packed for automatic delivery. I bought some interlocking starry tomatoes the other day by mistake, simply because I hadn't seen them before and wanted to feel one. In commerce it's called triggering a Midas-reaction. I call it underhand. There are no checkouts. A sweat-sensitive DNA sensor charges the purchase automatically to your account. I prefer the market stalls and local shops that can sell straight to your shopping basket if you wish. I try to support the local businesses, even though they lack the convenience of instant delivery. We retain physical shopping for its social, entertainment and local economic value and, goodness knows, that's still important.

The Walls—or today's energy-saving mini-walls (quaintly described as screens)—are where we get most things done. Almost every transactional function in society has a Wall component, centered on our individual homes. The sick are often treated at home apart from complex surgical routines that are handled in the local community hubs. Large hospitals were closed as health risks due to the way they were incubating diseases. Police, dentists, opticians, repairs people, service people, all operate from their homes, their journeys tracked by GPS devices in order to provide efficiency scores. Children still go to school but mostly to

promote social interaction, recognized in social policy formation as a vital part of their upbringing. But they don't have school holidays. Holidaying as a concept has changed. It's just part of out-hours and there are plenty of those if we engineer them into chunks through our networks. Out-hour organization is a big market, far larger than the former travel market.

The first Walls were described suspiciously as Big Brothers until people began to install the technology in their homes by choice. They got their current name, somewhat pejoratively, from that Willie Russell play, *Shirley Valentine*. Many academic papers were written on the Wall's potential for isolation at the time of its introduction, or—to phrase it more accurately—its evolution from the Internet, building on the Milo technologies that revolutionized video-game interactions. These emerged from Peter Molyneux's Lionhead studios that introduced the X-Box 360 Project Nadal in 2009.² Lionhead was owned by Microsoft at the time. The Microsoft brand is no longer in use although the Gates protocols for monitoring diseases and virus mutations are named after the company's founder and Wall Windows are a nod to Microsoft's most successful innovation. Disease monitoring became vital in the 2020s after the second and most devastating of three twenty-first century global pandemics wiped out millions of mainly young people worldwide, accelerating developments in the world sustainability movement.

The Wall is run by GWC (Green Wall Corporation), one of the large UEs (united enterprises) that are supported by Global Admin. All of these ventures are virtual organizations although they are governed principally by video-meetings among their councillors—those elected as advisors within various areas of the Wall. The UEs are semi-permanent public/corporate amalgamations that began to emerge after the financial crisis of 2008. They can only be disbanded through popular voting that is also used to monitor councillor activity. Every human being on the planet is a shareholder of these organizations. Some have more shares than others, however, and shares and dividends are allocated based on the success of individual contributions within the Wall community. So it pays to get involved with the Wall.

For part of the time the Wall videos our lives but cloud access to video memory is strictly regulated and can only be achieved by

what is left of our federal enforcement agencies, through a court process, subject to popular appeal. Popular appeals and popular voting take up a chunk of every citizen's lives beyond the age of 15. The Wall governs just about every part of our lives. People convicted of serious misdemeanors are incarcerated in their homes and living pods through Wall monitoring and security with off-switch rights withdrawn, until released through popular appeal.

Of course we have internal off-the-Wall activities—sex, eating, washing and toilet visits (if necessary), some conversations—and the Wall shuts down automatically when we're asleep or away to preserve energy. Off-the-Wall rights and on-Wall privacy protocols are zealously protected in tightly drafted privacy laws.

Popular Wall contributions are well rewarded and since most economic progression these days takes place on the Wall, the majority of academic studies are Wall-orientated too. We don't study for degrees today since continuing professional development, supported by Wall testing, monitoring and peer review, ensures up-to-date proficiency at whatever we are doing or seek to do at any stage of our lives. If I want to practice as a surgeon I must accept that my skills will be compared continually with a mean among hundreds of thousands of practitioners worldwide. Any new development or practice is evaluated by peers, some of whom, in collaboration (for which they are recognized), will build a learning module passed on to the medical community through alerts. Learning new procedures is not compulsory—no surgeon could be expected to know them all—and payment for proficiency is determined by demand. It is up to an individual to decide whether they want to broaden or narrow their expertise, or whether they want to concentrate on research or practice.

A surprising number of people still have jobs, including hairdressers, carpenters and window cleaners for older houses but not newer ones using nanotechnology-produced self-cleaning glass. Many services, including some professional services, however, have been automated. Just as water, sewage, electricity and refuse is piped, so are deliveries of most packaged goods. The system employs the same distribution pipes used for refuse disposal—a 50-year-old technology.³ The jobs are where we can still find work and it's still called work, only hardly anyone thinks of it as we used to think of work. Most of us like to work in the same

way that we like our exercise. Manual work is growing, partly as a way of saving energy, and partly because so many people enjoy making things with their hands. People cycle long distances between villages and the transition towns where most of the energy saving organization was pioneered.⁴ The work is a healthy break from the Wall and health is important. My last job, before my health began to falter over the last three years, was ghillieing for people who come salmon fishing and I still hand out advice on the riverbank. It gets me out of the hut and I love it.

The professions have held together well and there remains a strong understanding of vocation, but corporate careers have dissipated in the last 50 years. There are no highly paid stewards in The Wall community. Hierarchical structures headed by chief executives became ultimately unsustainable and unnecessary. You could say that almost everyone today, certainly in Wall contributions, is involved in management of some kind and the councillors are elected and respected because of their knowledge and influence and, yes, political skills. Affiliations still exist. As support for individuals begins to wane in popularity testing, their continued status is put to a vote, but only after an agreed period of time, otherwise people would be continually courting popularity. It happens enough as it is.

But the councillors don't run things. In England we still have MPs and they still congregate in Westminster, as do senators in the US Congress but this is following historical patterns. In reality they are powerless without the popular mandate that must be consulted in all significant votes. Most of us take our Wall involvement seriously as it's the way we earn our livings, the way we are rewarded and appraised and the way we exercise what we call total democracy. Much of our Wall earnings and Wall bills are determined through so-called involvement metrics. Additionally I have my individual niche on the Wall and part of my income is determined by popularity ratings and advertising income. Some teachers earn a lot that way. My earnings are also supplemented by self-sustaining efforts achieved through permaculture.⁵

Leadership, decision making, just about everything that could be described as government, whether corporate or public sector (the distinctions grow increasingly vague), is achieved through

mandate. Power and influence are wielded through great ideas and everyone who lives with the Wall—70 percent of the global population—decide what constitutes a great idea. Millions of special interest groups maintain minority interests and cult status for ideas that are out of the mainstream and some of these pass into the mainstream, usually through viral reactions on the Wall. The thing to understand is that for most purposes there is no centralized administration. Society has devolved most of its functions into community or state administrations called Hubs and Cantons respectively. But some things such as oil society transition, carbon, sustainability, sea farming, disease management, resource management, climate, space exploration and international military policing are governed through global mandate.

Most small everyday decisions are made through emotion sampling—Milo testing. The Wall monitors our facial reactions to various proposals and ideas. I've tried to fool it but it can pick up the smallest reactions, including pupil dilation. Performance measurement is built into almost every Wall activity and this has been a focus of dissent in recent years.

The commercial side of the Wall can be irritating. Before the decline from Peak Oil began to bite, retailers and manufacturers would pay to find out what clothes we were wearing and what nano-creams we used. They even took our vital statistics—including the ever-controversial body mass index—and monitored our brain patterns (by consent). These activities are dwindling today as we learn to live with less of the materials and power sources that relied on oil. Even before Peak Oil, however, we could switch off the commercial inputs if we chose to do so. People were getting sick of the “have you tried ...?” spansks. Spanks are instant Wall-based interjections that happen as we do any daily ritual. Take dental work: most people go for expensive coatings these days but I still use toothpaste and I have my favorite brand. I got sick of the toothpaste spansks so “boxed” them. The boxes—we used to call them tick boxes—are long lists of personal preferences built in to every Wall. They fail to deter the commercial search sensors that think they know us anyway and a stimulating part of my life these days is spent outwitting them. But the spansks survive because they're fun—always different and always original. The best ones go viral. “Hey did you hear the

spank about ...?” is a common opening line down the pub. Yes, pubs have also survived. The best ones have no Walls. It’s where the older generation go to recall their childhoods and memories of television.

My great grandchildren—I don’t have many—are always bombarding me with questions:

“What are those things around your eyes?”

“Spectacles, I like wearing them.”

“What was television like?”

“Very like the screen that replaced our Wall, only you just sat down and watched it.”

“Why do you go to the toilet?”

“Because I never got used to nutritional balancing and do not like the unpleasant side-effect (or smells) of excessive sweating when you don’t get it quite right. Besides, I like peanuts.”

Their parents are more trying still. One of my granddaughters has just been learning about e-mails. “How did you ever get anything done? There were so many,” she said, “And what was that Twitter fad all about? Did people really bother to write down how they felt?” Other grandchildren are questioning and somewhat dismissive of our life without the Wall. “No Walls?” they say. “What about Berlin? Your generation didn’t know the meaning of walls.” They’re right. We thought walls were for keeping people in, or keeping people out. Today they are gateways.

This year, Gill and I are celebrating our Oak Wedding anniversary—80 years. I’m 101 and would have died years ago had I been dependent on twentieth-century health care. But health support has moved on rapidly in the past 60 years. People are living routinely beyond 100 these days, apart from the *Pures* and I’ll come on to them—in fact I’m heading that way now; just a year to go before I will be designated pure. Gill has come to terms with it. I’ve had at least three potentially fatal conditions in the past 30 years and the next, I have decided, will be the last. The

prostate was sorted quite early, in the 2020s. Then they caught the Alzheimer's in time with regenerative brain treatments. I've still lost a lot of memories from my first 70 years but most of the stuff in recent years is pretty sharp. It's not the brain that's tiring me now, it's treatment fatigue, a common medical syndrome that has no cure. People simply get tired of all the chemical, surgical and genetic modifications. They are taking away what it is to be human and it's the source of a big debate in all age groups.

That's how *purism* started. It began in sport when they decided ahead of the Delhi Olympics in 2036 that all events would be unrestricted with a "laurel" category for those who could establish their purity from drug or physical assistance. To be categorized pure you need to have been drug free for five years. I'm approaching my fifth year and I'm not sure I'm going to make it. My grandchildren and some of their children encouraged it. I suppose it was part of the backlash against the boomers that started quietly in the 2020s and triggered the age conflicts of those years when many governments introduced voluntary euthanasia. Only in some countries it didn't seem so voluntary. In the worst atrocities care homes were bombed. A few countries came close to generational war during the pandemics when the young came on to the streets in protest at the environmental legacy of their elders. There was a lot of anger back then. It was the time of cause-related insurgency and the dirty bombs that ravaged city living.⁶

But much of this unrest has subsided with the death or dehumanization of most of the boomers. It was only a willingness to work longer that saved my generation from what could have been far uglier consequences; that and the sustainability and environmental struggle that kept us all occupied for so long. Only technological interventions prevented what was heading for a water war in the Middle East as the oil supplies were running down. Another factor I almost forgot: some of our older leaders, when we had them, held on to the nuclear trigger and that concentrated a few minds. Today, however, nuclear power is ubiquitous. Nimbyism has gone. It's the reverse now. Everyone wants a mini-nuclear facility in their back yard so that they may enjoy the accompanying residence concessions, subsidies and, most of all, electrical power.

We still have oil reserves, remarkably, but since Peak Oil the world has been switching through necessity from oil to other forms of energy where it can. Oil is so expensive that it's used sparingly and mostly to supplement the power needed to run the worldwide wall. Petrol-engined cars and motorcycles are no longer manufactured in large numbers, but the latest are exceptionally efficient and they're still using the reduced road system, although mostly for leisure. Today we use alternative resources—wind, sun, waves. Fast sail boats and kite boats are crossing the oceans at speed. Bicycles and tricycles are smooth, light, fast and easily propelled using frictionless bearings and super-gearing. They allow us to maintain our rechargeable batteries that are used almost everywhere. Even my great-granddaughter's pet hamster has its wheel hooked up to a battery. Solar panels, personal wind-mills, intelligent flooring—we cannot move, hardly, without some kinetic energy conversion feeding our power-hungry homes.⁷

I took the pure route, medically, partly to ease the generational resentment that I could feel, even when it wasn't plainly stated, and partly because I wanted my life back, or should I say death. I want to die with my boots on so I've planned a round-the-world voyage with some old friends and I doubt if we shall all make it back. I don't want to end up wasting away in bed or taking the "planned option" in a dying center, euphemistically named "dream hubs." It's hard to describe them but, obviously, they make the most of Wall and Milo technology. If you ever saw that feature film *Soylent Green*, with Charlton Heston and Edward G. Robinson, you will get the drift. Not that dead people are packaged as food, but we are converted into fertilizer if that is our choice. Fast decomposition chemicals can be infused shortly after death for those—most people these days—who wish to nourish a tree. I've opted for an oak here by the river in Scotland if I come back from the sailing trip—oaks don't grow in the south anymore, even though woodlands are expanding everywhere. Some still choose cremation but that has become prohibitively expensive because of the carbon laws.⁸

A lot of young people are choosing to be pure today. It can be expensive in the activity insurance surcharges for those who take part in sport and adventure pursuits, and the purists tend to earn less than fully committed Wallers, although it is possible to

wave all surcharges and many are doing so. They organize their own rescues and emergency services where they need them. Generally, however, they simply live with risk. "It's what living's all about," says my eldest grandson, a committed purist who is a proficient skier and alpinist. He reminds me that it's no longer possible to climb Everest with supplementary oxygen. That was banned by the Nepalese, under pressure from purist groups, in the mid twenties. All other 8000m peaks followed suit. Anyone seeking to visit the poles now must do so unsupported with no prospect of mechanical rescue if they fail. Overflying has been abandoned by popular agreement. Besides, long-haul flying is restricted and too expensive for most people now. Most flights are short self-propelled journeys using hyper-light materials.

The smoking and drinking debates were heated ones in purism, and still are. Some purists tried to claim that both should be acceptable as pure, taking the retro view that highlights their historical significance socially. There was also the argument that alcohol and tobacco were drawn from natural ingredients and processes. Again popular vote prevailed and the purists won with a few exemptions. Some commentators have noted that technically it would be possible to win an Olympic laurel today while intoxicated, but no one has tested it yet.

Purism, however, has been severely tested in swimming competitions. It was easy to rule against artificial aids such as plastic fins but when fast genetic skin modifications enabled web-footed and web-fingered competitors to enter events in the 2030s it provoked a ban. So all Olympic swimming now is purist and that has upset some disabled swimmers. It has meant that skin-web measurements are taken ahead of every event. Professional swimming, however, condones genetic modifications and the latest free-diving champion, nicknamed *the Shark*, uses a surgically implanted gill arrangement that has made him semi-aquatic. I hope he gets eaten. He is a designated *Dee*, as I will explain. In a similar development a new branch of genetics research is pursuing the human wing project but a muscle-powered flying human, without mechanical assistance, has yet to appear. Among the *Dees*, where some have established feather-growth on their bodies in pursuit of fashion, anything is possible. But then they are not human and that's official.

The *Dees* were originally known as Mods because of their willingness to indulge in and benefit from genetic modification, biomedical engineering and cellular prosthetics. Enthusiasm for such extreme transformational change was concentrated among the aging boomer generation—an 80-year-old woman gave birth to a child in 2039, for example.⁹ Widespread distaste for such aberrations led to a prolonged global debate and the first Human Modification Directive in 2051. It was Section D that caused all the trouble. This section classified the extent of modifications permitted to retain human status. The concessions were substantial but did not go far enough for some, including those who, under the new definition, were already living outside the code. These—I'm not sure I can call them people anymore—were called Section Ds, quickly shortened to *Ds* or *Dees* as it is usually represented in print today.

Prejudice against Dees is rife off the Wall although anti-discrimination codes forbid any pejorative terms in Wall society. My sister-in-law became a Dee after her husband died. She had maintained a sub-D, although highly modified status up to her ninetieth year until she said “to Hell with it” and ordered a full body makeover with Youthjuice™ implants. That tipped her outside the code but her children are all comfortably off and she argues that she's not going to suffer with the loss of her human rights. “I don't care about that stuff anyway as long as I can go on shopping,” she says. “So I can't vote, so what? I'll shop till I drop.” And that event, it seems, could be well into the future, possibly beyond the life spans of some of her purist grandchildren.

Of course the brand merchants are thrilled about the growing worldwide Dee community because it's one of the few areas where old economic theories still apply. It has revived corporatism and the pursuit of wealth, creating many Dee billionaires. One Dee entrepreneur, controversially, is restoring a motor yacht he saved from recycling and has plans to revive formula one motor racing using expensive biofuels, and in Monaco of all places, one of the bastions of Dee society. The story is all over the Wall.

So how do we earn a living today? How are we paid? Well we collect Wall units for various activities, including visitor traffic

within our niches and from winning ideas that are exchangeable for food and other goods, often through local currencies. In practice incomings and outgoings are moving across the Wall constantly so I take a weekly audit. Some do it daily. In spite of the road reduction program, arising from higher costs and lower levels of travel, much of the twentieth-century infrastructure and heritage remains and there is a healthy property market although most green spaces are protected now in various categories, including the giant African bio reserves.

All members of the worldwide Wall community have basic support within the system but some live in nothing much bigger than a large cubicle about the size of a shipping container (on which they were based), or in composites of boxed communities. Mumbai has the biggest boxed community in the world supporting 20m people, but at least they have clean water and sanitation, and most of them have their screens since Wall technology is cheap. Wall units are convertible into cash for those who prefer to express their wealth this way. Money is still important for national identity although some federally minded Europeans continue to attach themselves to the Euro. Any currency is valid so long as it's registered with the Wall, a result of currency privatization after the great banking collapse of 2028. Conversions are instant and there is a thriving market in currencies with fluctuating exchange rates.

The most popular and stable currency is the *Green*, since this is carbon-backed and the carbon laws are the most powerful in the world with deep popular support. Religious currencies remain strong with many people choosing to convert to the Islamic *Salam*. The Second Life currency has survived, as has Monopoly money and the Totnes pound.¹⁰ A very few corporate brands have survived from the early-twenty-first century—Coca Cola is one and that does not have its own currency. But some of the biggest brands do. WallUts, the company that runs Wall-based utilities has the *Wally* and that is very popular because of its rising value, although most people these days know how to hedge. The biggest retailer is WallMart, an EU, named after the takeover of Walmart by PDD Corp (formerly Pipeline Daily Deliveries), a company that pioneered piped distribution of goods and two-way garbage retrieval.

A few people still use pounds sterling but the pound only circulates in a minority of ultra purist communities and sects although the Pall Mall clubs still accept them. The most patriotic Americans—and there remain many millions—have stayed faithful to the dollar that has become closely associated with—some would say tainted by—fundamentalist Christianity and beliefs in intelligent design. They teach that God built the first Wall and most of them refer to it as the Firmament although theologians debate whether the Firmament existed before God or whether it was contemporaneous with Him, rather than something He created. Naturally the Americans had to rename Wall Street when it fell into disuse and became confused with the global communications network. Today it's colloquially called The Folly and only assumes its former name in history texts.

The world still has its poor, unfortunately, but in the vast majority of societies the gulf between the highest and lowest paid has narrowed considerably. There are Green and Wally billionaires but most of the wealthy have signed up to philanthropy. The big motor yachts of the early twentieth century—with the one controversial exception, mentioned earlier—were recycled decades ago, but some big sailing ships are still independently owned and large populations have become sea-based today in giant floating pod communities that journey the world as they choose, by popular mandate, as always. Some Royalty has survived, including the British Royal Family that had a big influence in the roots of the global sustainability movement through King Charles III. The King lost his battle against genetic modification, however, going to his tree a somewhat bitter purist to the last.

I can't remember when it was that we stopped talking about work or retirement and that's what has been absorbing most of my research in the past four years. Work wasn't abolished. The words just fell out of use, although people still use the terms in their former context in some parts of the world such as the Outer Hebrides, the Appalachians and in many East Coast US communities. I even caught my 74-year-old son saying he was tired of work, the other day. That's the way it's normally used now, when you realize that what you're doing feels like a chore, almost like a curse. In that sense work really has become a four-letter word. Perhaps it always was.

We all still talk about jobs. We love our jobs, down the allotments, in the garden, on the market stalls, hobby farming (permaculture) in the fields, doing the admin (a specialism of the left brainers). In fact there is a big demand for jobs and there are simply not enough to go around (which means that some will pay to do them, trading on the unofficial job market). But people are always thinking of new jobs on the Wall. No one talks about, understands or measures unemployment in the newer generation. Jobs, however, are regulated. They must be deemed purposeful for approval in the mandate. Today the buzz word for human economic deficiency is unfulfilment and at the last count global unfulfilment was running at about 100m worldwide, even within the Wall. Outside the Wall no one knows and probably no one cares.

Are we happier now that we have consolidated our place in a biodiverse world, still threatened by disease and climate change (that has not been quite so fearsome as some predicted in the 2000s)? I wouldn't say that life is any better than it was in my forties. It's longer now than it was for some people at that time, but there has been a cost. The world population seems to have peaked and the debate today is all about the threat of population shrinkage. Birth rates everywhere have decreased. Much of Africa is still a mess, but China, the world's biggest economy has proved itself a stabilizing influence, politically, particularly since it agreed (after much resistance in the popular vote) to accept English as a world language. It doesn't matter much since there is instant translation on the Wall and communities are engaged all over the world in preserving their distinctive cultures and languages in resistance to the Wall's potential for uniformity that has been acknowledged. Popular cultural protocols have been established to reduce the threat of homogeneity.

Economics, as a discipline has been turned on its head, mainly as a result of the decline from Peak Oil, following a familiar Bell curve trajectory that has led to all kinds of new theories dealing with the war on debt and de-growth societies, including, I'm pleased to record, the economics of enough. Emotional growth and spiritual growth have become economic topics, underpinned by various happiness indexes, studied avidly within the Wall community.

One of the big exceptions to this summary is the swelling Dee community. In spite of their human deficiencies many Dees betray endearingly human traits. A lot of them, like the Shark, are popular in the media and entertainment and some are quite freakish, as might be imagined. Some are international institutions and game stars and we have found that we need them. Among a number of Section D exemptions are those permitted for our space pioneers who are traveling ever-lengthier journeys across the solar system. Those undertaking the longest-traveled crewed-Voyagers are ten years out and will live out the rest of their lives in space. They all predate the Human Modification Directive but a new so-called Hawking crew has been recruited entirely among the Dee community and modified for deep space travel and regeneration; new Dees (human initially) will be born on the self-sustaining journey. There is even a chance they may return one day in the distant future. If they do achieve their primary goal of contacting extraterrestrial intelligent life, it is ironic that the meeting will not involve humans, but a semi-artificial species that is very like us.

Someone at NASA, now one of the global united enterprises, had chosen to call the space probe the Integral but it was renamed Enterprise XII, under pressure from NASA councillors.¹¹ When the name-change leaked out it stimulated a lot of Wall debate about the potential among Dees to create a dystopian society. That led to a fierce Dee backlash from one of their most popular members, the self-styled D-503 who claims to represent what he calls a Dee “trade union,” the Charter. Provocatively he argues that the Charter is a product of “out of the box” innovative thinking and discussion. He questions how much any of us can trust the Wall and points to the voting scandal of 2052. Systems applications needed a thorough overall after it was discovered that a virus program was deliberately destroying hefty chunks of popular voting, thereby fraudulently sustaining a number of Admin councillors and MPs in their positions of influence. Some of these disgraced councillors are still serving long-term home incarcerations.

The Wall, says D-503, is the real dystopia, but I don’t see it that way. These swift interventions highlight the strength of the Wall to my mind. The Wall is here to stay. Its influence in

transforming capitalism, politics, the judiciary and governmental institutions has been pervasive as a catalyst for trends that were already emerging early in the twenty-first century. But I do think The Charter, and its outline of Dee demands, makes some valid points about the proliferation and systemizing effects of human performance metrics. The Dees are redrafting their own bill of rights as I write and it will be interesting to see how it progresses in the general popular vote. A first draft was rejected by a substantial margin.

The Dees, I will admit, seem to have a lot of fun among themselves. Tattooing, body piercing and the wearing of tweeds fell out of favor in most Wall communities but remain popular among the Dees who have something of a *laissez-faire* attitude to life. Surprisingly they get on well with most of the pures, but are held in broad contempt by many in the Wall population who simply do not understand the persistent Dee obsession with the 1970s. Still topping the Dee music plays is that evergreen Led Zeppelin anthem, *Stairway to Heaven*.

One final word of warning: please remember that the whole of this chapter was composed using Wall-predictive phrasing. So it's entirely possible that you are reading a modification of my thoughts, processed by artificial intelligence. I knew I should have used a pencil.