**JUNE 2021**

Do you ever wonder what the Kitchissippi UC Men's Book Club members find to talk about?

Tuesday's monthly meeting was a fascinating, wide-ranging discussion of significant topics, with some lighter items thrown in for good measure.

We started with a review by Russ Mills of Vaclav Smil's most recent book, ***Grand Transitions: How the Modern World Was Made***. Societies that have successfully undergone transitions in population, agriculture, energy and economics have emerged with food surpluses, abundant energy use and expanding economic opportunities. In other parts of the world, billions remain largely untouched by these developments and are relatively poor. One fascinating passage that Russ read concerned the long, long list of technological developments that have occurred since the 1940s--and it wasn't just the cell phone.

Will technology allow us to escape the demise of the planet, predicted in ***Limits to Growth*** in 1972, and which has many followers? Bill Tyson ably illustrated this analysis with a couple of graphs and insightful comments. "We are already consuming well above a sustainable level and even so the vast majority of humanity is living well below a standard North Americans consider acceptable."

Mike Lawler reviewed ***The Righteous Mind: Why Good People Are Divided by Politics and Religion***. Why do we find it so difficult to get along as a human race? Why do ideas like fairness and freedom mean such different things to different people?  Author Jonathan Haidt argues that humans are 90% intuitive and 10% reason, and that reason can only influence our intuitions and sense of morality at the margin. Not an easy premise if we hope technology will solve our world's problems.

Richard Christie spoke about ***The Irregulars***, a book describing Roald Dahl and his activities in the British Security Coordination group created by Canadian William Stevenson. Those who know Dahl as the author of **BFG**and ***Charlie And The Chocolate Factory*** may not realize that he was a pilot in World War II until he crashed, and later worked under cover, trying to bring the United States into the war, as part of the BSC.

Moving back in time, Paul Hitschfeld described ***The Secret Chord***, a semi-fictional biography of King David of Israel as written by his personal advisor Nathan the Prophet, through the words of its modern author, Geraldine Brooks. David was extremely able, but with blind spots and a somewhat flexible morality. Paul spoke knowledgeably about about David's era and customs, and observed that the attitudes in power and excesses of certain leaders in our age today are perfectly recognizable 3000 years later.

Clayton Porteous, sporting a headband with the word "Obstreperous" printed on it, described his favorite authors, including perhaps the most influential in his early years, Lucy Maude Montgomery.  Her ***Anne of Green Gables*** series was a huge favorite of his contemporaries in the early 40s, and defined a large piece of Canadian culture.

Tim Johnson reflected on Leon Uris's ***Trinity***(1976)***,***a book he read 30 years ago, which featured Northern Ireland's fractious population and bloody battles. It made him question the overzealous embrace of religion and revenge. Then, taking technology backwards, Tim entertained us with a straight face with extracts from ***Pears' Shilling Cyclopedia*** (1915), describing some of the modern inventions of the day.

Alan Amey completed our reviews with a discussion of ***This Is How They Tell Me The World Ends***. This is not, as the title suggests, an apocryphal, end of the world piece, but rather a discussion of how America has lost its lead in cyberspace, to the extent it is now very open to hacking by residents of other countries, including Russia, China, North Korea and Iran.

--Doug Patriquin

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