ELECTRONIC TICKETS, YOUTH DESPAIR AND THE FABRIC OF URBAN SOCIETY

a learned conversation against the mechanistic world-view in relation to Melbourne's TravelCard™ and CityLink's e-TAG™

Explanation about format:

This essay takes a "conversation" format. The two voices are those of the writer and youthful cynicism. The latter cannot see the value in a close theoretical examination of electronic tickets in urban transport systems. This style is adopted to encourage a self-critical journey into the theory of urban travel. The purpose is to gain better understanding of what is at stake when we think about our urban experience. The writer's voice is in the present typeface ruled by the left-hand margin. The cynical youthful voice is centred in italics.

I am glad you have introduced me. I thought I might have to do that by myself. So how will you begin this "conversation"?

I would like to start with an introductory comment about
Urban Planning and the Dilemmas of the Human Condition

Conversation One

A very pompous title! Are you trying to tell me that we will solve the problems of humanity by all becoming professional urban planners?

No. This paper is about the ways we think about urban

society. Since urban planners are also involved in the human predicament, their planning must presuppose some solution to the problems we face as people. Not just day-to-day travel questions; but also ways of understanding ourselves as we face very serious human problems.

About our identity, do you mean?

Yes. About more. Urban planning must be based upon a worldview that implies a definite view about the meaning of life.

Here we go! I can see you are going to need all my tolerance for this discussion which will end up as a heap of words going nowhere! You say "must". Well that leaves me out. I don't have a world-view and I don't want one either. So this just goes completely over my head. Bad luck.

We'll see about that. In this discussion we look at contemporary ways of thinking about the planning which says it wants to be "faster, better and cheaper".

Cleaner …

Such slogans indicate the planners' social vision – the "shiny mechanistic imagery" is trying to prove its utility. I want us to discuss the problems of this mechanistic world-view and suggest that this has a deeply negative impact upon human life around the world. Let's also discuss alternative ways of thinking that avoid the problems created by mechanistic thinking.

Sounds a bit like a sermon to me. But I haven't got anything better to do, I can hack you going on like this, I suppose, for 20 pages. But why did you pick a cynic? Wouldn't you need someone more pliant and compatible to help get your cheery urban planning message across?

Your cynicism is compatible with the underlying world-view that dominates urban planning around the world. It seems better for my purposes to have someone like you, who is actually rigidly incompatible, to discuss these matters with.

Hang on a minute mate! Who says I am rigidly incompatible?

Sorry. I didn't mean you were rigidly incompatible with all things, only with the view I am putting forward. You help me because I want to run against my **own** cynicism. I don't believe a professional theorist should build social theory upon cynicism nor even upon naïve optimism. But in this discussion I want you to participate so I can put some positive views of recent developments

And you want me to be rigidly incompatible? That sounds like a roller-coaster ride!

Not at all. Your cynicism always puts a question mark on my view. That's my point. Does that explain it?

Not really. You want to do all the hard work by struggling with all the easy-stuff that comes from my voice. Sounds as if you want a pedestal, in fact it's as if your pedestal is me ….

I'll have to let that cynicism ride so we can get started, I suppose.

Get on with it. Where do we intend to begin? Or where have you decided to start?

Well. With Melbourne actually.

And you are calling me the cynic?

Give over! This first session is to discuss recent Melbourne developments (1988) and then we will have four more discussions concluding with a list of 20 basic principles for the study of urban transport systems.

OK. Go ahead. I'm trying not to feel sleepy already. What recent Melbourne developments are you talking about?

Melbourne's traditional ticketing system now stands on the brink of a new transformation.

I have just got used to the new one since all the tram conductors were taken away and replaced by ticket machines. Are you trying to tell me that we are about have another new upgraded system? I don't know how much I can stand. If it ain't broke why fix it?

Well the system before the system before last …

That would before I was born more than twenty years ago …

had ticket systems for each individual ride. Then it became tickets for travel in a region, or across regions, and then it became a ticket which covered trains, trams and buses

but not taxis

throughout the entire Melbourne metropolitan region. It actually encouraged people to take to public transport.

The integration of various transport media with their own various payment systems into one TravelCard was recently further transformed by the "privatising" of ticket sales. You could buy TravelCard at milkbars and other places and you had to scratch it to validate it when you took a journey ….

>*I remember. Many tried various tricks to wait and see if they had to scratch before getting off and then if they avoided such scratching they could use the same ticket next time …*

Milkbars competed with tram conductors and train stations for the selling of system-wide tickets. Then it was considered too costly and too inefficient to employ ticket sellers in the transport system itself.

>*My Grandma talks about the time milk was delivered by cart at 5 am in the morning. Milk delivery was controlled by diaries. Then milkbars came along and milk deliveries ceased. And now the local milkbar … Same with honey, and bread and deliveries from the green-grocer.*

Yes, there is historical development here which helps us understand the general trends that are taking place. The point of this bit of ticketing history is that tickets are now sold by "the system" … by machines.

>*Why not just put a bar-code on our foreheads when we are born and every time we go through a laser-beam our bank accounts can be debited and every time we leave work we could walk through a credit beam for our bank account.*
>*Easy!*

In fact that is what happens now in many aspects of our lives.

>*And watch out if your bank balance is 23cents*

overdrawn. No wonder the banks and financial institutions are making a killing … $4 transaction fee for 3 cents overdrawn!.

Can we get back to Melbourne's tram tickets?

I've got to have my fun. You wanted me come along for this ride. Stop complaining.

But now new developments mean we will be looking at machines dispensing tickets in a slightly different way.

You're trying to say that machines break down and that a new form of deviance has emerged. Technologically endorsed free riders, is that it? Sometimes on my route the machines don't work! And we all know what to do. And when the ticket police come along they can't book us and they then get a right ballocking from little old ladies telling them to get the machines working and stop the harassment! It's fun on the trams when that happens. Makes my day!

No, I wasn't referring machines breaking down. That is a good point, though. I was thinking about Melbourne's overall transport system and how money flows around it. The ticket machines which collect money for the transport corporations now are getting involved in a new technology, not unlike your idea of automatic payment from bar-coding. Your cynicism has helped already.

Please stop. You sound like a hyperactive university lecturer. What are you referring to?

Because of the CityLink project we will now see.payment for our transport in a somewhat different way. Machines on the trams stand alongside the automatic debit system that occurs when your car's *e-TAG*™ is read by the blue beam shining across the tollway. Automatic payment from your road commuter's account is another way to fund

travel by an electronic ticketing system.

This is making sense … at last! Sp "ping!" the blue beam is a kind of ticket although we don't see it until we receive the bank statement that it has been uplifted from our account by EFTPOS.
.

When the new privatised tram and train networks decide to merge with CityLink in a few years …..

So we might have a bar-code on our foreheads at birth! Is this all a conspiracy?

Not necessarily, but massive data systems on people's movements are going to be generated and it will be possible to track people's travel, at least those who use the electronic *e-TAG* system. This data collection will be subject to law. It would be interesting to look carefully at the legislation and see how strict these laws are, and how it can be integrated with police systems and the records of vehicle ownership and registration. Such a system will be useful in traffic surveillance assisting policing and in traffic control. Electronic tickets, in this case the *e-TAG*, give us an idea of the type of society we are becoming.

Could there be an integration between TravelCard and e-TAG? Remember e-TAG still isn't working despite all the trumpeting. CityLink seems to be in deep trouble.

Whether it is or not, the technological possibility of an *e-TAG* system and an *e-TAG* integration with TravelCard is not totally unfeasible. It would require a massive integration of transport, public and private on a scale that maybe is not in evidence anywhere else in the world.

Oh, here we go… we are first with the latest again!

I am not saying it is desirable. But such a possibility now

emerges - and the fact that we do not know if it has been considered by the powers that be does illustrate one important thing about Melbourne.

> *What's that? That we love electronic gadgets?*

Maybe. I was thinking how this country and this city is over-committed to the motor car. At the back of my mind is the idea that Melbourne transport problems …

> *You don't have to tell me about them.*

…are a result of the over-development of our roads and the chronic under-development of the rest of our public transport.

> *Here we go again. You're taking my role here. What you are saying is that the politicians and the "mover and shaker class" - those who own the Casino, those who want big towers, those who want more and more world-class sports facilities – are all in the pockets of the big oil companies and the car producers. We over-develop our road transport system by building new roads and fly-overs by getting too many cars out onto the road in the first place and by making public transport simply inefficient and unworkable.*

Well when we look around the world it seems that this kind of planning is the favored way to go.

> *You mean "world's best practice"™?*

Yes. Our view of ourselves is bound up with motor transport, and the mobility we have given ourselves in the ownership of motorcars. I say it is really over-ownership of motor cars. And this is based on the way we **think** about transport, movement and cars. The way we **think** about these things is an important part of our lives.

So that's why we have this learnéd discussion!

We need to re-think so we can devise ways to reverse the trends and shift people back from private transport to public transport. That is difficult at the moment because it is so hard to argue that public transport under privately owned operators is as efficient as private transport under my own steam. Part of the shift away from public transport has already involved a concerted effort away from defining public transport as public. This first involved the corporatising of public transport and then the next step was to sell it off to private operators.

Maybe if the union apparatchiks who led the opposition to corporatising and privatising weren't giving themselves inflated salaries then their members would have got in behind. But this was done during Labor's decade - the 1980s! It was the political left who created these large-scale opportunities for very rich people to invest and become super-rich. Public infra-structure is now merely a means for private advancement and self-aggrandizement. It is sold off so that the entire system enables the poorer to get to work and so that the ultra-rich can become ultra-ultra-rich and for that they need to keep the whole thing going by their investments and shares in CityLink projects. It's a fraud. They now need Governments to make policies that ensure that the mass of people will drive their own cars to work through these ubiquitous blue beams. "Ching!" There goes another $3.25 off your bank account.

It's good to have you along. Your criticism is sharp! What happens if there is a large-scale boycott of this new system? Remember, it is a private road with tolls. We are continually told by politicians to act responsibly and to tighten our belts. So what happens if people prefer to save their money and not use this CityLink?

Go on. I follow.

There are two immediate options. One would be a mass return to public transport. The other is that people will plan their trips to avoid the **e-TAG** beams. In fact many people are preferring the second option already and the result is chaos. Former streets which were quiet have now become speedways at off-peak times and choked with peak-hour traffic. This is serious. It is a planning issue that the privatised urban planning of CityLink did not take into account. But what will happen?

> *You wait. Streets will be blocked off and traffic shepherded onto the CityLink tollway! There will also be a need for an increase in police numbers to catch road offenders. And then there will be some bright spark who appeals to the Competition Commission by saying that freedom of route choice has been restricted and since this has an impact upon business freedom they will then do something. It's a complete farce.*

In the Sydney public transport system you can purchase a ticket which allows you to go exactly where you want to go. In Toronto you buy a "token" in an integrated tram, bus, train system. In Melbourne there is the TravelCard™ system which allows travel according to the type of ticket purchased - the ticket shows the zone, the time and the kind of purchaser (concession, child, elderly), and must be validated as part of undertaking a legitimate journey. In the case of toll-ways, Sydney has collection booths with collectors or automatic bins into which $2 coins are thrown and this sets off a mechanism lifting the barrier. Melbourne has no such barrier. It is a system *sans frontier* close to an electronic fund transfer transaction in a supermarket. But though toll-ways increase the need for surveillance to ensure compliance, the chances are that many will plan their travel to avoid this new "fast lane". Unlike publicly-funded transport, CityLink is envisaged as a self-funding operation which raises questions about its

viability if, for example, a widespread boycott occurs.

You imply a potential for serious civil unrest. I think Governments are always in the pay of the rich and we just have to live with that. Civil disturbances are inevitable! Roll on the revolution.

The problem is in your mechanistic view of social change. It ignores the people – now – who are unjustly affected. Your cynicism ignores norms and principles concerning the way the law should operate. It also avoids thinking about how urban planning should be developed. To understand the social significance of a toll-way we must think about the old system and understand why the change was introduced and what it was meant to achieve. What was the basis of the older system and why has this new system been accepted? We are reverting, in principle, to a system of privatised road-networks going back centuries – aristocrats once charged people for travelling across their land, but that changed with laws that guaranteed traversing rights, the right of movement across such land.

You seem to be heading us down a path where we will also discuss aboriginal land rights in a minute. Let's be practical here! Don't overdo it! It is after all just the rich trying to use society to make a buck. Why can't you accept that?

The reason I can't accept that view is that it such an approach is a cop-out. Sooner or later when we start thinking structurally and start thinking in terms of principles we will see that these things – road transport and aboriginal land rights – are in fact related. They are related in terms of our understanding of what justice is and how that has an impact upon the right of free movement, the rights of access and the right to travel. When you adopt your cynicism you simply allow the mechanistic world-view to have full rein. You might say

"The injustice is my fault!"but now, when you have an opportunity to think through the issues in a new way, finding new ways of thinking about it, you say "Why bother. It's all inevitable!" You then sit by and allow the "inevitability" to unfold and you say to yourself "This is better than renting a video!" Human responsibility is not advanced by such an approach. You are copping out!

And I say you're just being altruistic! I'll keep listening. How do ticketing systems function in all of this?

It's not just the advertising on the backs of the tickets, if that is allowed. A tram-train ticket system not only tells us where people want to travel, and when; it also implies a certain view or views of what travel is and what it means. Today we have machines on trams. For 100 years Melbourne had conductors. But that does not mean that we necessarily think machines are better than conductors. We have to look a bit more carefully at the history of this issue.

You're going to have to argue well to convince me.

Trams were introduced to help people travel happily, comfortably and conveniently. But though they were built to transport people to work, the tram ride was also viewed as a "journey", something one would do for recreation. It was not only workers who took a tram to the office or factory. Trams invited people to be "travelers", and their appeal included how they helped us have holidays and enjoy weekends.

This sounds like a "back to community" to me. You're not going to get nostalgic about the "good ole days!" I hope.

Not at all. I said that to understand what ticket machines represent today we need to see tickets and what they

represent in an historical frame of reference. These days "travel" is still possible and the corporate management of the tramways welcome it as part of their "tourism" package. "Travelers" are also "customers" or "commuters", and recreative travel is viewed as a commercial opportunity, a particular type of transaction between the tram/transport company and the customer. Whether travelers have ceased seeing themselves in these social terms and have acquiesced in the view that they are buyers of a "travel product" would need further reflection, debate and also empirical study.

Bring on the questionnaires!

Previously, when we had tram conductors, we had ticket sellers at the tram stops, and the tramways and the railways grew their own culture, their own extended family, their own social network. For a while they also had their own competing allied bus systems that took their customers to parts of the urban network that had neither trains nor trams. Melbourne is like a wheel. The tram-lines and train-lines are the spokes. These bus routes of the train-buses and tram-buses ran along around the suburban circle rather than along and in the same direction as the tracks. There were also inter-depot sports competitions.

Now you are joking.

No. Not at all. These social networks supported, for example, the all-Australian tramways sporting carnivals with teams from all States and many regional centres as well. There were choirs and bands, weekly concerts and dances, annual picnics and fetes. My parents met at a Railways Institute dance. The parts of the transport system developed their own sub-culture for the social life of the employees and their families. And it was in that context that the tickets on trams were not transferable to the railways and vice versa. So this just goes to show that the competition between public corporations predates the

developments of the last three or four decades!

So questionnaires distributed among commuters could only ever tell part of the story. This is rather interesting.

Then the role of the conductor on the trams was to ensure safety and act as inspectors and maybe also as a travel guide. Tram stops, for example, were all by the side of the road. In later times we have seen the development of the self-contained stop in the middle of the road, controlled by traffic lights. So the conductor's social role developed as the tram-system adjusted to the social developments of the public transport system overall.

And as society became more complex tram-depot culture faded away like other community-based organisations. Is this when the motor-car became a necessity?

The car had something to do with it. But the development cannot be explained solely in terms of the car. Government policy may have made it easier for motor-cars at times, compared with the rest of the transport system, but there are always many facets to be taken into account.

Trams maintained their popularity also because of their function in periods of non-peak travel. They also helped to define the closer-in suburbs compared with those further-out. Just to look at a map of Melbourne and see where tram-lines are now and how they have grown and where they intend to go is instructive. Just like train-lines. But as private transport increases so also the public transport carriers have to find other ways to attract customers. There are various concession fares introduced as they try to win back travellers from the tendency to privatised motor-car road transport.

And specials: Group travel on weekends and

holidays. Don't forget "specials", especially for tourists.

In an urban setting like Melbourne roads were formerly funded out of general revenue.

And don't forget the three layers of government here. They have all had a contribution to make to the system.

Traditionally it has been taxes and rates that have ultimately provided the funding for public roads. In some shires and municipalities there are some (usually unmade) roads which are classified as "private". They emerge out of an agreement between various landowners who then pay for their upkeep. But the CityLink **e-TAG** system is not a "private" road in that sense, although as a road system it is a privatised, run for profit, tollway. Again the actual legislation is very important here. But CityLink does something new. It introduces a definite class distinction into mass road transport. Formerly it used to be seen with respect to the cars you drive – BMW and SAAB over against Toyota and Holden Barina. Now it is also a matter of which road you drive on. It is possible that, at least initially, CityLink will become a status symbol. The advertising points in that direction. It speaks with a voice …

a smooth, South Yarra, private school accent …

which encourages us to embrace this faster, cheaper, safer and greener

and one for the greenies of course.

… "traffic breakthrough Melbourne has needed". The ideology used by CityLink to advertise its produce applies the fashionable images of fast living applied to commuting, which have previously been identified with rail transport ….

When I lived there we would refer to the
Frankston 7.54am to the City as the Silver Bullet!
Our own special Shinkansen!

Well the imagery is now applied to the motor car. But this
CityLink advertising does not try to convince car drivers of
the undesirability of trains, or even trams, as a way to get
to work. To advertise the product and avoid getting into
overkill, the CityLink **e-TAG** adverts need to remind motor
car commuters of the slowness of car traffic without the
CityLink system of toll-ways!

But it is a great idea, isn't it? Using traffic to
disperse traffic and make it easier on the entire
road system?

Great idea. But if it is to be sustained in the long-run it is
still a very dangerous line of marketing. What is
happening now when, in its initial stages, CityLink
increases the traffic snarls?

But that is because it isn't finished and anyway
the Burnley Tunnel with its leaks from the Yarra
River could not have been anticipated?

Who said? Why was this not identified through an
environmental impact assessment? Southbank had a
problem with the Yarra's deep silt and its unstable water-
table! They had to more pour more and more concrete to
stabilize the Casino's foundations. They knew this. And
now this crucial tunnel does not look fit for use …

I stand corrected.

What happens if at this stage more and more people
decide, in frustration, to leave their cars at home and try
the trains and trams again as the preferred way of getting
around? We might be in for a few surprises.

Your analysis here is rather compelling.

According to the advertising it is assumed that for something to be thoroughly modern it must be fast. But the project to get us all ön the move" is now months behind and we are bogged down in the Burnley Tunnel. Even this shows that the advertising cannot be trusted.

Maybe they started the advertising too early?

Any idea of traveling around Melbourne for purposes other than getting "from A to B across Melbourne at non-stop, expressway speeds" is simply left out of the advertising picture. The **e-TAG** system promises to be a system in which non-stop car travel prevails. This is mythic and ideological of course.

As you say, we will have to watch the public response. The new State Labor government had better listen to this discussion if it knows what's good for it. They may have reduced the day-ticket cost to $2.50 but big schemes like CityLink have the potential of making life difficult for Governments particularly when the scheme collapses in a heap and the Government has to pick up the pieces.

Social policy has implications and social policy about tickets has an impact upon the entire fabric of the social setting of transport. It's not just about the Brave New World generating travel data. It is about that, and how it will be legally controlled, but much more. To say that a ticket system has to be a machine system because a machine is more efficient is a narrow view of the costs involved. It is a narrow view of efficiency. This narrow view reduces costs to immediate calculation of what money has to be paid out and what money can be saved. Timetables and driver/ conductor discretion in the movement of vehicles are always part of travel, but when the ideology to promote machines that run faster and

faster shapes social relations, seemingly without limit, then the margin of discretion is squeezed in the interests of risk minimization. And this becomes dangerous in various ways. We don't need cynicism here. We need careful structural analysis and a refusal to be bullied by the ideology of those who want the "new system" at all costs.

There have been many thousands of subscribers already to the **e-TAG** and, at the time of writing, it is now two months behind implementation. It was planned to be fully functional by the end of 1999 but this will not occur. Major structural problems have emerged. And are there major financial disasters on the road ahead? More to the point traffic snarls have not been reduced in this "world's best practise" system. They seem to be greater than ever.

*The problem is, and this why I am so cynical about **e-TAG**, commuters dare not now go back to trams and trains. They'd be mad to want to do so, because they feel alien to what they were. Have you been on a tram or a train in Melbourne lately?*

Your cynicism is quite justified..

Well thank-you kindly Mr Positive!

The abolition of conductors from trams and the deserted railway stations with surveillance cameras speak of something important that has been lost. It will still be in the memory of the people who travel around Melbourne. Many commuters know this unease. This fear is not the paranoia of those on the margins who think government is out to get them. It is deeper than that. It is the outworking of a mechanistic world-view.

Come again?

It is a feeling about the way in which public transport

employees used to contribute to an open and accountable civil society. They weren't always doing this well. But their removal means they can't even do it badly now. It indicates that when citizens move around, particularly in non-peak periods, they can not count on the support of nearby employed staff who have a task to help safeguard the public interest. Tram drivers are caged in their driver seats and trains are now patrolled by "Train Police" checking tickets and interrogating travelers. Previously taken-for-granted juridical and moral dimensions of the "trip" have been taken out of the system and replaced by pure monetary interest in the drive for cost containment.

And you say that has something to do with the outworking of a mechanistic world-view? How would this relate to e-TAGs?

In the *e-TAG* system – "there's no stopping or slowing down to pay your toll" – "It means you can spend more time where it counts most, at home and with friends." This may cut out the employment of toll booth operators but it also means that the CityLink system is trying to sell itself in terms of its utility in allowing you to get from A to B faster. The problem with this system is not with the efficiency. That is yet to be proven. It is with the underlying world-view that is implied in the advertising, in the rationale for the development, and yes, therefore also in the development itself.

The *e-TAG* advertising endorses a view that those with the faster cars, who can get from A to B even before CityLink came on the scene, have a more meaningful life than those who do not have such hyper-toys. Meanwhile the person who does not have a fast car and who cannot afford the daily expense of tolls, and has to take the "slower" route, somehow has a less meaningful life.

And trams and trains are reduced even further to being a form of anonymous transport to suit the needs of those who want to travel that way! And

to ensure that those with the fast cars can get to work before their employees who have to take the run down trains and trams.

A sociological analysis of the "true social cost" of train and tram ticketing will have to scrutinise the assumptions of the policies which imply that machines are more efficient. "True social cost" must include the unpriceable and non-priceable aspects of the transactions before and after the change to the technology.

Unpriceable and nonpriceable? What are you talking about? Were these concepts part of my economics course at the university? Is this some kind of jargon manufacture?

Not at all. They may have been there in concepts like "externalities" and other "down-stream" concepts. What I am trying to suggest is that the full social reality must be kept in view and not reduced to economic concepts in our economic thinking. Consider the personal friendliness and the fact that a conductor is also a safety officer, the one who offers aid to those who need it - the disabled and the elderly - as well as serving as a ticket inspector. At Christmas time he may have started the passengers singing carols on the way home. These roles were "bundled" together in one person. Now they are separated and the ticket inspector's job description is merely to check tickets. And the other things just fade away. Why are ticket inspectors usually experienced as unfriendly? Is it because they no longer sell tickets? Is it that they are employed in a situation that is being abstractly measured by financial costs and in which a sense of "trust" among the public has been lost. That is how a "confrontational" situation has been produced by the new managerialism. The role of the "connies" to be "facilitators of inter-dependence among travelers", we now see with hindsight was, indeed, an important "unpriced" facet of the role. Our problem now is that we have developed a social system in which "performance" can only be measured by cost and

whether the output matches the financial input and throughput. The only thing we care about are those things which can be priced, and when we offer a service, it is all a matter of those things which can be measured.

And you wonder why I am cynical.

There is also a cost to being totally cynical. It is to imbibe the world-view that drives this societal chaos. It is manifested in a managerial mentality which assumes that investors in a corporation are only concerned about getting a financial return for their investment.

And aren't they?

I think corporations have a public duty to the entire society to educate their investors that the business of business is not only business!

If that's a crusade count me in. But then if I am investing am I not wanting full return. No. Count me out.

See. That is what cynicism does. Considers the structure, and retreats in the interest of naked self-interest. The matching of services to costs, and the elimination of all extraneous matters, is what management theory refers to it uses that over-worn phrase "best practise". Of course, under these circumstances, "quality" is considered to be a necessary part of the service. But then what is quality? Look closely and you will see that it is what can be measured in terms of inputs, outputs, fulfillment of protocols of program performance and client satisfaction,

Tell me you just made that up. I can't believe this! Do you want me to take this rhubarb seriously?

It's part of the world-view driving work and driving the way social policy and urban planning is being developed. The

underlying view is that quality, however it is defined, has to be measurable. As a result those factors which can't be measured are precarious at best and irrelevant at worst. This is the contemporary workplace.

This is demoralising. You are telling me that the mentality that shaped CityLink is the same managerialism that shapes what happens when I get to my place of work? Is nothing sacred? Do I have no space in which to be free?

We will return to this in our next discussion about youth despair. Your cynicism is a good lead in for that.

Am I going to be paid for my contribution?

With respect to **e-TAG** a sociological analysis of "true social cost" will critically scrutinise any policy or advertising slogans which imply that road systems which enable you to travel faster give you a more meaningful life. Such rhetoric ignores the meaning to be embraced *while traveling*.

But as I just complained. They're out to get me on my way to work now! It's all equality control. It's all through-put. I can't stand it. I don't think I'll turn up for the conversation next time
.
We'll leave it there then for conversation one.

Conversation Two

I decided against my better judgment to return. I didn't want you going on all by yourself. You'd bore the readers.

Thanks a lot. The mechanistic world-view, when it is worked into a policy for road use, wants to make an appeal to an abstract consumer – the driver. But many

rides are never taken alone, and more people are implicated than merely the people who start at A and who converge at B.

Communal co-responsibility is an integral given in our travel. However such developments reduce our roles as citizens to those of commuter. It might be suggested that commuters will help each other more if there are machines instead of conductors selling and checking the tickets, but this does not happen "automatically". As we discussed previously such a development can emerge when transport employees are involved with the cultivation of an ethos of civic accountability in public spaces. Without such office-bearers such an ethos does not develop.

> *You'd better get going and get a full head of steam. I still have a head-ache from our last conversation.*

The point of my analysis is that the conductor was a social way of reminding people that they were not just abstract commuters but people filling a "bundles of roles" at the same time. The conductor had an educative function – about transport. When the conductor is replaced by the machine then the assumption is that the new "traveler" is (merely) a commuter. Consider the signs; the legalese of signs and warnings. These signs give a faulty vision of what is transpiring on the tram. A person does not stop being a parent just because this person is on the way to work, or a daughter just she is on the way to school.

A new breed ticket inspector is employed to check whether coin-only operated ticket machines have been properly used. This indicates that the view is one in which the monetary transaction between the traveler and the "tram-as-machine" is the most important thing defining everything else which takes place on the trip. It also assumes that trains gain their customers from people

solely, or mainly, for the purpose of going to work or in work-related activity.

The *e-TAG* system is also a surveillance system. Those who travel on the roads without previously purchasing an *e-TAG* will be subject to heavy fines. And because of this, this system has the potential to cause severe distress, particularly in emergency situations.

What do such machine systems imply? The machine deals with money not people. Therefore the machine system assumes that people on the trams, or in fast cars, are simply people who put in money in the slot.

But we have to ask here: Who are excluded from view in the new machine policy? The new policy ignores the fact that the new system excludes some categories of client because the tram is not what it was and the roads are not what the residents have hitherto assumed them to be. The people who put the money in the slot are traveling for a variety of reasons; the people in cars on the CityLink toll-way are no less so. They are not just commuters. They are parents, schoolchildren, friends, shoppers, visitors, vagrants, businessmen, elderly, tourists, etc etc who have become commuters.

So how are we going to unravel all this?

Firstly, I would distinguish between the mechanistic world-view and the mechanical metaphor.

What? World-view? Metaphor? What are you on about?

A world-view is the taken for granted perspective a person has by which the world is interpreted. A metaphor is something like saying that this conversation is "speeding through the stations". Or that our friendship is "plain sailing". We can study society "as if" it is a mechanical system, but to say that society is a mechanical system is to adopt a

mechanistic world view rather than simply use the mechanical metaphor.

I think I follow. If I was to say that society was like a sewerage system, this is different from saying that society is just a pile of sewerage! Yeah I can follow that but it's a fine distinction.

But it is important. Consider. If we are to say that society is just sewerage then how do we analyze the social aspect of a blocked drain, in contrast with say trying to get your child into a popular kindergarten, or a traffic snarl? These are not just blockages that are more or less complex than each other. They refer to quite different structures. The drain is physical; the queue at the kindergarten is social, and the traffic snarl is a social setting where people's machines find it hard to move in relation to each other.

Like Dodgem Cars at Luna Park you mean?

Yes. But you have then also used another metaphor. To say that society is like Dodgem Cars is not the same as saying that for this particular problem it is useful to think of society as if it is Dodgem Cars. The latter makes it possible to unravel something about the structure of a particular social setting. The former makes it difficult, if not impossible, to compare and contrast Dodgem Cars at Luna Park with a traffic jam. Saying that society is sewerage is to say something which is structurally and qualitatively different from saying that society is like a blocked drain. We will have no concept left. Problems are what happen and we. can't do anything about them.

You mean we have to keep the mechanical metaphor in place to ensure that there is a two-way flow between world-views and metaphors. Otherwise metaphors get blocked in the world-view and your world-view gets clogged with too much metaphor!

Something like that. Good illustration. The mechanical metaphor is appropriate for us when we are discussing how we can work out how to solve various architectural and engineering problems that confront us in our social life. The mechanical metaphor is very useful, I am saying, but the mechanistic world-view ends up with a view like yours – all of life is basically cogs with the system defining what you do and who you are and how you look at it. freedom is abolished, except the freedom to be a cynic!

I can see you've thought a lot about this. You seem to have got me in a corner. But I'll find a way out. You wait.

When society is referred to as a mechanism and when social policy is based on the idea that society is merely a system of mechanical inputs and outputs, then there are important consequences. It is these consequences which I have been trying to discuss in our "learned conversation".

Tell me more about this mechanistic world-view. If people take this view are they going to end up saying that social life is just a pile of … what I said before?

The mechanistic *world-view* prides itself in having everything measured and statistically enumerated, and yet it cannot put a value upon itself. When it comes down to it the mechanistic *world-view* is a view about its own inevitability.

Are you saying that if you take the view that all of life is meaningless then sooner or later you have to admit that the statement about the meaninglessness of life is meaningless. That makes sense. So, from where does meaning come?

Hang on! I want a discussion not a question and answer session in which I tell you the answers you should be able

to better work out for yourself. The people caught up in this particular world-view come to see themselves as the inevitable visionaries of this approach. In fact they did not catch it; it caught them.

It sounds a little loopy, scarey, even creepy.

It may even be deeply self-destructive because it implies that you have to destroy your own view of yourself for it to make sense. This has a deeply ironic twist when the world-view develops insight into economics - rational choice theory is the result.

That stuff. That is loony tunes. I did a business degree units once. I didn't get far. I asked in the first lecture "What if I chose to reject rather than accept this theory on faith?" You know what he said? "That's your choice!" Most stayed in that course because they thought they had no other choice! And they even were preaching this stuff at me over coffee in the caf!
.
The mechanistic world-view can mean deep-seated nihilism and those who see themselves in this way think of themselves as mere cogs.

That was my fellow students alright!

It is a mode of reflection that is inherently a *flight from thinking.*

But they have to think to fly from it, don't they? I get you.

Don't be too hasty. It is easy to challenge this world-view because its impact can be seen and felt, close at hand, in many ways. But the full consequences are fully human whether aesthetic, economic, ethical, political or spiritual. Maybe we are all mechanistic more than we dare admit.

No way! No way at all. After going through that experience I could never, ever, be caught up in deterministic thinking. Quite impossible! Go on. Back to urban planning, eh?

Consider the planner. He or she is happily at work in his/her planning office, adopting the mechanistic metaphor in the freedom given by a higher-paid planning position governed by a contract that ensures that planning will be effective and efficient. These days it is likely that such a position is shaped by the managerialism of Osborne and Gaebler.

Our university's Vice-Chancellor is Chief executive Officer. He goes on television when some big problem arises and tells the entire country how his university is doing heaps for students. He's given up studying himself and he's firing the academics who are the best teachers, but he says the university is not in debt so students are better off. This is mechanistic thinking.

Planning can look very different from the planner's side, even though the planner has to live in a house, drive a car and experience the consequences of other planner's insights. All of our social activities are activities subject to the laws, policies and planning of other planners. That is why we need to develop a society that encourages public accountability in all ways.

Accountability?

Since we all have to live out our lives and the consequences of the decision's we make, we should build a society in which we become accountable for what we do and what we say and what we fail to do and what we think.

So, you want me, a cynic, to become more

accountable by having a discussion with you
about world-views and metaphors. True?

And now you have forced me to be accountable, not only to you, not only to myself, but also to the readers about my work as an academic. Planners are responsible for policies and they are accountable for the decisions they make. So we all have to ask whether this policy will bring about a just development of social life. We all live in a variety of relationships. And these relationships can never be organized as sub-parts of one over-all mechanical system. Social relationships are not sub-systems that can be disconnected from other sub-systems and still stay as the same "unit".

I see where this is heading. You mean that it may
be useful to use the "system" metaphor for
studying social relationships but to then say that
a society can be dismantled and re-constructed
*like **Lego**™ is actually to slip from metaphor into*
world-view. I get it. But how do we check
ourselves from doing this? We can be pretty
smart and tricky when we want to be.

That's where accountability comes in. It may be that reality – let's call it the "human condition" - places a limit upon the use of the mechanical *metaphor*. But then it is us who use metaphors and us who view things according to a world-view. So then it is also us, in our own responsible capacity as fellow human beings, who must develop our understanding of things, and check ourselves, and allow ourselves to be checked. This is necessary if we are to live without fooling ourselves. If the reality of things is being ignored because of the mechanistic *world-view,* then we should be brave enough to admit that it is us that have misunderstood things, because world-views are always part of the way we see things.

So it is not just a matter of judging "other" world-

views! It is a matter of criticising ourselves? Not just cynicism about other people's reflections, but being alert and watchful about the ideas that crop up in our own heads.

There is a variegated structure of human accountability, the starting point for us as we develop a critique of the mechanistic *world-view*. And in this context that our thinking about urban planning should begin to look for an impact of mechanistic thinking upon the way our urban life is being shaped.

This is interesting. Forgive me for going off the topic but you seem to imply that teacher and student need each other so they can criticise each other's ideas, and sharpen each other's ideas about reality. That means that self-criticism is also a two-way street. If you keep this up I might start to enjoy learning because it seems now to be about a process which should be encouraging me to think
.

All of these relationships are delicately balanced with each other in the fabric of our social life, but the fabric is sustained by our recognition that we have interdependent social accountability.

Hang-on a minute. Fabric of society? Delicately balanced? You are now engaging in biological metaphors. "Social life" instead of "social system" and "delicate fabric" instead of cogs and units. Now tell me if I am wrong here, but it would also be possible to lapse into a biotic world-view here in which biological metaphors spill over into a biological world-view. What would a biological world-view applied to urban planning look like, I wonder? Survival of the fittest and the law of the jungle?

It is important to distinguish between world-view and

metaphor. I admit I used biological metaphors here. They are useful when we are trying to move away from mechanistic metaphors. But you are right. The world-view we need must allow us to use all possible metaphors and analogies without using any or some of them as the base of the entire scientific enterprise. You have touched upon a very important issue that will need to be developed in our future discussions. It is not wrong to have a world-view motivating and ordering your concepts in your study of society. The problem with mechanistic (or vitalistic) world-views is that it becomes impossible to distinguish world-view from metaphor. When a world-view is locked onto one or other metaphor, we develop a fix on reality based upon that one metaphor.

Back to sewerage again. Oh sorry. I mean back to the discussion about sewerage systems, … keep going.

No you are right! We have to reckon with all the different responsibilities we have and to recognise that they each have their own legitimate place. These responsibilities are all held together "under heaven" as it were, and in a social fabric we knit by our positive and at times critical activity.

It's getting a bit too religious for me here. What do you mean "under heaven". This religious knitting is a bit scarey. I don't pray about my work and I can't knit either.

What I mean here is that all social relationships are inter-related and that the responsibility of how another person's accountability in one area relates to that person's accountability in another or to relates to my accountability is not determined by one or other of our accountabilities. But it fits into a larger "whole"

You mean "whole" not "hole" as in "black-hole"

Yes, and this is no joke. You indicate here that the

arithmetic metaphor of wholeness, unity and diversity can also help us as we talk about our social relationships. We are totally under heaven and the structure of our totality is not up to the form we give to one of the parts.

> *Did I do that? You seem to be saying that the full reality is bigger than the negotiations we make between the various parts of our social life. It's a bit like that on a personal level. I have friends at home and I have friends at university. One of the happiest moments of my life was a party I had once. I invited both groups of friends - they mixed and talked to each other and I could only sit and experience it. It was great. A thousand flowers were blooming and it was in my garden and it was going on all around me.*
> .

We form our own stewardship of what we have been given,

> *friendship, this is an important given in our social life*

… and indeed we find ourselves professing our faith, confessing the ultimate meaning of our lives. The resources we have been given function as givens in the way we serve each other in our social relationships.

Yeah but what about the downer after the party. I was then so happy and contented because the world was so big and good and I wasn't in control and I didn't need to be in control; but the next morning! Oh! What a downer. I was so lost! I wasn't drunk at my party but I might as well have been. I was depressed. Why? I don't know. Things felt so meaningful and happy one evening and the next morning they were so futile and so … meaningless. I think I need a break from this. See you tomorrow.

Conversation Three

Where were we? Can we get back to urban planning?

We were discussing world-views, metaphors and meaning. You were discussing ecstasy.

I recall. Can we discuss more about the sense of meaninglessness. It seems that the ecstasy of meaning is only possible because of the depression of meaninglessness. This is a psychological way of viewing it, I suppose and I wouldn't know if this is perhaps a metaphor or a world-view. Maybe it is all a matter of a mechanistic view of our feelings?

Could be. Remember we were talking about how the mechanistic world-view dominates systems of public transport. We shouldn't get too far from that. Insights like yours might help us understand how commuters travel day in day out for hours to get to work. The feeling of warmth they feeling when they get home, contrasts with the other feelings they have had throughout the day. The feeling of the rush hour on the morning train contrasts with the slow boredom of the staff meeting. The feeling of hard work contrasts with the

feeling of release at lunch-time in the park. You may have actually shown how a mechanistic world-view helps us to misinterpret our feelings and emotions.

Are you only discussing inter-personal relationships here?

Yes. But not only that. There can be warmth in your relationship with the tea-lady and that contrasts with the cold stare of your boss. On the other hand you can have coldness in informal relations and heat in bureaucratic ones. But there is diversity that is connected to our psychic feelings.

Which raises a question about the possibilities of "feeling good" in public places. Is it the place itself or is it the people?

Public places should help us feel good in some ways, but feel good about what? Ourselves? Our city? Our nation? Surely we have to discuss the "feel" of a place when we are assessing the planning of public spaces.

Last time you indicated that you wanted to discuss tickets. Maybe we should think about what that has to do with feelings.

Good one. Let's reflect a little upon the feelings we have when we buy a TravelCard from the electronic machines that are now placed on our trams. Visitors who haven't been here before won't notice the difference except they might be comparing with what happens in other cities. But tickets were formerly sold by ticket conductors. "Connies" we called them. Now we miss them. Many travelers experience the purchase of this new integrated ticket in ways similar to your post-party ecstasy you told us about last time.

Except the difference is that in their depression they know why they are depressed. Conductors have gone. Conductors are no longer employed

on trams; their absence is felt. As for me I could
not explain my day-after.

Yes. That is a fair comment. What are the discernible differences we experience in our feelings about public spaces once tram conductors and station attendants have been restructured out of existence?

In the new Melbourne toll-way it will be possible
to drive around with an electronic "tag" that does
away with the need for employing someone to
collect the tolls. But this has been "done away
with" even before the toll-way begins to collect
tolls. If you were from Sydney where they do
have toll-gates, and where they do have toll-gate
officers, you might "experience" this as a loss of
some personal presence..

Your analysis is getting sharp and to the point. The "feeling" is not just about individual people. It is about the change in the social structure of travel. Now the feeling does not tell us what the justice or the injustice is; it may point to it in some ways. It may be a feeling which we later decide is based upon a misunderstanding. But it is a feeling with its own structure, nevertheless. For many commuters the "feeling" of unease due to the removal of tram conductors has to do with the adjustment of their entire lives to a new social reality. We can ask whether the commuters' world-view allows them to adequately interpret these changes? This change will be experienced in terms of a very common feeling concerning the "loss of community".

Some Japanese friends of mine could not
understand the conflict we had over the abolition
of tram conductors. After all, they said, isn't travel
about efficiency and effectiveness?

If that is all there is, then indeed why employ a person to do a job like dispensing tickets which a machine can do better? The question, nevertheless, is dependent upon that little

word *"if"*.

> *Yes indeed. My question is this: IF humans are*
> *not machines why do we then employ them in*
> *jobs "as if" they are merely humanised robots?*
> *"You can come into this job and bring your*
> *emotions with you but really we require you to*
> *keep your emotions separate from your work."*

For these reasons nihilism and the mechanistic world-view represent a serious loss of confidence in the way we carry our accountability when we travel. But it is not inevitable. In Japan they are used to ticket machines. But that doesn't mean they have become robots. When I got off at Himeji I thought I was at Kobe. But when the handle on my suitcase broke. It was as if a railway employee caught it before it hit the ground. He tied a new rope handle on my case so I could carry it. if he had been selling tickets he would not have been on the lookout for opportnities to offer such assistance.

> *You mean that the Japanese system has been*
> *driven as far as it can by the mechanistic world-*
> *view and sooner or later reality hits back. That*
> *reality says it is good to help each other when we*
> *need assistance.*

Yes something like that. The mechanistic world-view may come to expression with serious workplace consequences about the way workers are viewed. The way we view workers depends upon the way we understand ourselves as humans. And though the mechanistic world-view is experienced as inevitable, it is not inevitable that all workers will be dominated by this world-view to the same degree.

> *Now I see your point about how a world-view*
> *transcends the selective use of metaphors and*
> *why it is important to make a strict distinction*
> *between metaphor and world-view.*

Indeed, the social policy planner should selectively apply the

mechanical metaphor to particular architectural and engineering problems. But it is true that planners do not only use the mechanical metaphor, they seem to be forced into the mechanistic world-view as part of their vocation to develop and guide social policy. And then they (we) treat our fellows in what seems to be remote-controlled ways.

> *I know this. It is called getting an extra increment for facilitating downsizing of the corporation! How are you saying this happens?*

We can not examine this here, except to say that the mechanistic metaphor expands into a world-view because people (in this case the CEOs and social planners) think of themselves in terms of having no other choice. They actually begin to see themselves (cosmically) as mere cogs in some grander mechanistic process either as Machiavelli's prince or as Nietzsche's *Übermensch*. Under the influence of this world-view the planners who plan mechanistically begin to feel like cogs. They begin to experience their various legitimate relationships as grinding upon each other. The people subject to these policies are indirectly encouraged to view themselves and their social life in this way too, and come to experience society as a grind.

> *I begin to see a way here of analysing my party and post-party feelings. But I have to think a bit more before I can say whether I was intoxicated with mechanical or biological metaphors. Maybe I had mixed them– the party was vital and the next morning was all cogs. I didn't go to the psychiatrist but maybe I should have. Can a shrink sort out my metaphors?*

I am not sure about that. We all have to examine our thinking and this includes reflecting upon our deepest feelings. Sounds like you had some very deep emotions, almost as if they were at war with each other.

That's another metaphor – the battle field! I can understand the way some of this goes now much better, I think. This was what Hugh Stretton was on about in his book.

Yes indeed! Stretton actually extended the metaphors much further than the abstractions we have referred to. He talked about "planning in plain language" selectively using the metaphors of cities as communities, marketplaces, battlegrounds and machinery. There are probably other "social setting" metaphors as well. The important point for this discussion is to avoid reducing all of social life to what can be explained (and measured0 within the framework of any one particular metaphor.

I'm following. Can you give me an easy to grasp example here?

Sure. Consider the Government programs and advertisements geared to influencing young people at risk in urban settings. Frequently these programs fail and the advertising has the opposite effect? Why? The programs and advertising may be aimed at challenging developments among youth that indicate a sense of hopelessness, nihilism and despair.

Alcohol addiction, drugs and sexploitation. That kind of thing?

Yes. Social workers and youth advisors may be employed and be available to such young people who exhibit such stresses. But the programs are not oriented to challenge the mechanistic *world-view* that holds these young people in its grip.

I'll send them along to this discussion. That'll put 'em right. I could even like school on terms like this. Guys who quit school because they are hacked off might just get a handle on things if they considered the theory in this discussion …

You think so? I'm beginning to wonder whether I should appoint you as my discussion sales manager! Seriously though, such disillusioned young people – and some are not so young anymore – have probably had too many people trying things out on them. That is also part of the problem. It is also that sub-cycle of depression – hey mate don't feel down here's another scheme to get you out of the ditch! – that becomes part of the problem. Why, I wonder?

Going on what you've said previously it will be because of the underlying world-view. Is that it?

You're learning. When these programs are based on a mechanistic world-view they will be set up to influence young people's behavior ….

Let me try: in a mechanistic way, "as if" the young people's behaviour is simply a matter of cause and effect, "as if" it is just a matter of pumping the right kind of petrol into the person. They fail because they're robotic. Hey!

And then, when the program runs its course, the program is assessed in terms of measurable behavioral outcomes – the degree to which the programmatic stimuli have led to desired behavioral responses. You see that any world-view has a tendency to permeate the entire exercise and not just be contained in some assumptions built into the program. They actually are part of the way the planners see the program and the way people subject to the program begin to see themselves.

Well Hugh Stretton is right then. It is a battle-

ground but not just in terms of material interest of one class against another, as in Marxism and class-struggle. It is also a matter of a conflict manifesting itself between world-views, and also between metaphors which have been extended into schemes to give total explanations. I suppose you are saying it is also a struggle between those who want to base science on an absolute metaphor and those who do not.

I will leave the philosophy of science until another time. But you are on the right track I think. The problem is that such programs and advertising can be part of the problem rather than helping people to be part of a solution (or even their own personal attempt to find their own personal solution). Programs which do not challenge those who devise programs, and those who are implementing programs, to re-think their own views are pretty dangerous because then these programs will assume that it is only for the subjects – the clients – to start re-thinking. To inform the way people view themselves we have to first take the forest out of our own eye before we can see to take the splinters out of those with blurry vision.

Watch it. You're getting religious again!

One well-placed advertisement on a railway station may claim to encourage deeply depressed young people to seek help, but there will be, in all likelihood, other advertisements on either side which directly and indirectly confirm the young person's depressed state of mind. Does the advertisement show that the designer and the advertiser has actually taken their own message to heart?
Usually no. You've obviously traveled on my line!

Moreover, well-intentioned Government programs often present as efforts to spend tax-payers' money in ways that show that "something is being done". "Work for the dole" schemes are said to be good for the people involved. But the problem with this is that it treats people as those who will

find meaning in the power holder's scheme. The power holder however has not demonstrated, via the scheme, or the advert, that they have a truly meaningful and non-mechanistic approach. Often they illustrate a desire to go on a power trip.

Please keep politicians out of this. I am trying to avoid getting depressed.

They may want to alter how people behave so that their publicly-funded program gives measurable results in terms of changed behavior. But it is possible that such programs add to, rather than taking away from, the general ethos of despair which many young people confront.

So how about the electronic tickets? Can we return to how tickets contribute to this despair and conflict?

Now we wouldn't want to say that programs are inevitably mechanistic; that would be mechanistic at a deeper level. But powerful people are always announcing some future social benefit in terms of a mechanistic understanding of causes and effect. They see themselves as fixers. And the despairing youth can very easily simply respond by having a fix! We know how politicians try to increase their reputations by showing how things have changed *numerically*. The measured change may in fact refer to some good and worthwhile result. But it is also the publishing of results, and the broadcasting of success, which *also* shapes the subsequent view about the program held by those who went through it. Will they not be tempted to see themselves as pawns in some larger "chess game"?

It occurs to me that when a new system of ticketing is introduced there will be serious debates and big controversies. We can say then that these are driven by alternative world-views. At times these conflicts may be which metaphor is going to be allowed to expand to include all the

others. At other times it may be a conflict between one world-view and a norm such as justice. Let me clarify this further. You are not saying all new programs are driven by a mechanistic world-view but when we are re-structuring public programs, like transport, we are tempted (maybe for political reasons) by this mechanistic approach. It is historically and culturally very powerful. We will have to have discuss why it is so powerful and how it developed later on. But for the moment we take it as read. Is that right? We are analysing society in terms of how various competing perspectives, expand their own limited and valid metaphor into an all-embracing unlimited and illegitimate life-system. So why does the program fail? What's so flawed about expanded metaphors? Can you be a bit more precise?

You are now asking tough questions. Having social power to restructure and run programs means one can find resources to shape the course of events, to introduce different causes and re-direct responses to desire outcomes. But despairing young people might indeed have learned the utilitarian calculus of resources and opportunities too well. The despair then goes much deeper than mechanistic diagnostic formulae can reach.

Can you give a few examples here?

Sure. Take schooling. Those who have been subject to a mechanistic world-view in their school curriculum very often see no purpose in continuing to study. Or worse if they continue studying they see it merely in terms of the results at the end of the course. Or worse that it simply gives them a meal ticket and they live for tea-break, knock off time, week-end, annual leave, long service leave and great retirement. The purpose of work is that you won't have to work anymore.

But you are also saying that those who drop out

and those who stay in are still "infected" by the mechanistic world-view virus – an Intellectual Deficiency Syndrome perhaps.

Careful. You might be slipping into the world-view you want to avoid by means of a cruel joke. Further, those who have been treated in a mechanistic world-view by their friends come to experience great difficulty in making and keeping a new set of friends when they move to a new social setting. They feel used and hence the only way to relate to others is to thereby use them.

So world-view comes to expression in public and private, in all relations in which we live our lives. And it seems, at least for starters, that if we ignore world-view, then our experience, and our frustrations with our experience, will become even more complicated and frustrating. OK. I see the way you are heading.

This may also be the way in which family and parents view the place of their children in the household and the wider universe. And of course we know the way in which some employers also fall for this mechanistic world-view.

Treating employees as robots do you mean?

Yes but also assuming that the only reason people work is for the money. If a work place has become "just for the money" then the mechanistic world-view seems to have a field-day. This is why Government policies changing industrial relations – so-called "micro-economic" reform – have been so destructive. Government power becomes subservient to a view that demeans and degrades the worker. As a result of all these influences, and much more besides, young people learn to see themselves and the world they live in, in terms of a dominant world-view which basically calls them to a pretty senseless way of life.

You mean that the mechanistic world-view

actually tries to suppress the fact of its own existence. This implies that it is a way of looking at things that has been consciously chosen - so that in truth a mechanistic world-view doesn't want students, let alone social actors in a more general sense, to come to terms with it as a possible viewpoint. It assumes for itself the status of itself as the only possible standpoint!

Young people, in Japan and Australia, who hold to an alternative non-mechanistic world-view would be an exception rather than the rule. I do not say that it is mechanically inevitable that all young people growing up in these societies dominated by the over-extension of the mechanical metaphor, and its tyranny over all aspects of social planning, will automatically adopt this mechanistic world-view. But we should not underestimate its impact. And our discussion at least is trying to recognize its high probability.

It does sound as if this discussion has become a kind of "religious dialogue". Is that a fair thing to say?

Yes. But I wouldn't want to imply that we have moved away from sociology, economics and politics. The discussion of world-view is to show that these separate social science disciplines have to consider the totality of the human condition in some or other way. That is the point of taking this rather long route to electronic ticketing.

That sounds like you are admitting some inevitability in the way you view things. Is that right?

Yes although I don't think inevitability has to do ultimately with mechanical laws. It has to do with what laws are and what they mean for us. But that is another time and another topic.

I'll be back next time and we can continue this. I have to go. I have a train to catch!

Conversation Four

Where were we? Or perhaps where are we off to now?

Let's try and get to the topic. It is quite likely that if the mechanistic world-view is very powerful then it was be at work in the restructuring processes of a society. The restructuring will be inspired by a mechanistic world-view in a society where people viewed themselves in mechanistic terms. The problem is you cannot detect a world-view from outside a world-view. There is no religiously neutral or scientifically or legally neutral world-view. That, I am saying, is also part of the human condition.

Yes I have noted this tendency in what you have been saying up until now. You are wanting us to confront alien world-views but you haven't necessarily said what your "world-view" is. Let me try to guess? It sounds like you are saying that ultimately we live in a universe which is ordered and that humans have to develop and cultivate what they have been given. This sounds religious, perhaps Christian.

The fact that I am a Christian who holds conventional biblical beliefs does not mean that I am saying that people who are not Christian don't have a world-view.

I noticed that. Everyone, including cynics like me have a world-view through which they see the world.

Yes and the way we understand the operation of world-views in our life will very much depend upon the world-view to which we hold …

*Or which holds us… as in the mechanistic
inevitability thing …*

Yes. But then I tried to indicate above that perhaps it is not inevitable that the term "ïnevitable" can only be validly used within a mechanistic schema. Each world-view will imply a view of the order of our experience.

*So you are not saying that an imposed order is
necessarily the opposite of freedom. In your
Christian world-view there is some kind of
balance? Is that what you are saying?*

I am not sure how you are using the term balance here? It may be in a mechanical way or it may be in terms of making some kind of judgment. But I do concede that different world-views have different conceptions of morality, or fair dealing, or justice or beauty. We need to be open to test our social experience and to check whether what we expect is actually the case. That is part of the vocation to which social science is called. The world-view inspiring developments in social policy will still need to be confirmed in some kind of empirical investigation. Yet we certainly can ask whether mechanistic social policy will bring about a change to the inner attitudes of those subject to the restructuring. There may indeed be "unanticipated consequences", particularly when such re-structuring is driven by a high level of sloganeering, blinding the planners to the social reality to which they are actually contributing. But usually social planning is also a way of encouraging people to maintain the *world-view* they develop in their everyday thinking.

*Yes. But social life is not just about programs
and policies. It is also about modes of
implementation. And if policies are to be
developed which try to encourage people not to
view themselves in mechanistic terms then these
policies and programs will have to be consciously
and explicitly non-mechanistic in principle,
appealing to people also on the basis of logical*

and rational argument.

Well said. Let us briefly look at an example of a "social problem" common to both Australia and Japan. Governments at all levels and other social agencies are deeply troubled by youth suicide, drug use, sexploitation, vandalism and homelessness. One of the most serious problems confronting the planners of urban life is to conceptualize the way in which their policies and reforms have an impact upon the entire fabric of social life. Are they alert to the way in which policies and restructuring has indirect impact upon all people in society. Are those changing ticketing systems doing so with a careful structural understanding of the impact of such systems upon, say, disillusioned young people? This sounds like an unrealistic question, with only tenuous links between transport and social welfare. But it is not.

> *I cotton on. You are saying that an electronic system of TravelCard or **e-TAG** carries with it a kind of message about the direction society is headed, and by implication it speaks loudly to those such developments are leaving behind!*

You are getting very quick with your intuitions. I am not suggesting a pure physical cause and effect for what we call in this country "economic rationalism" and youth suicide. The connection I am making is not with the re-structuring of the universities, or of industry, or of schooling, or of social welfare, with youth suicide. But this is not to say that because each of these policy areas are not the cause of youth suicide that they are not contributing factors. The fact is that they are part of our social life and the fact is that the underlying mechanistic world-view of these policies is very often the same mechanistic world-view by which young people describe themselves and their sense of despair. Think for a minute about the way the system seems to encourage success and discourage failure. Think about the way success in the education system seems to allow participants to forget the deep emotions they previously had

about their fear of failure and the uncertainties they entertained before success was assured.

> *You're returning to emotions again. You are not saying that people should not feel fear and apprehension are you?*

Of course not. In fact that is the point. In a system where people "succeed" they can easily forget what it was like to "fear failure". They suppress it. Keep in mind that many urban planners were successful school graduates. Is it invalid to surmise that the planning process might ignore the possibility of its own failure because the planners are too taken up with their own personal success?

> *And we should not forget the validity of such emotions as fear and sadness as well. Is an education system bent on success able to help students face sadness, fear, failure?*

Precisely. This is also very important in helping us to identify exactly what is at stake here. A good planner, however, is one who knows that s/he does not know everything, knows that all contingencies can not be planned for. A good planner remembers. A good planner knows that not only success occurs in "getting from A to B". There are accidents. There are failures. There are fears and great uncertainties. Sometimes people take risks that result in great damage. But in the mechanistic world-view there is a perpetual temptation to forget about the accidents, the failures, the fears, the powerlessness and the total contingency under which we as humans operate. It seems as if it is a world-view which is generated precisely to forget these things.

> *Yes, there is clearly a way to solve problems "successfully" by sweeping things under the carpet, by disgarding them into the drain or gutter.A rubbish collection system can be very successful, efficient and effective. But our policies can be formed, you seem to be implying,*

as modes of rubbish collection. We return to the society as sewerage metaphor we used earlier in the discussion.

The mechanistic teacher may forget what it was like to be a student. The mechanistic nurse may forget what it was like to be a patient. The mechanistic surgeon may forget what it was like to be operated upon. The mechanistic police officer may forget what it is like to drive a car in busy traffic. The mechanistic bus-driver may forget what it is like to be a mere commuter.

I suppose we shouldn't be picking on this poor mechanistic person. Shouldn't we be using this "person" as a metaphor for ourselves, namely when we ignore justice and blindly act in a way that ignores fundamental realities for the sake of our efforts to stay in control of what we think and what we do?

I think you are outpacing me with that idea. Yes. I think ultimately the criticism of the mechanistic world-view has to be about self-criticism. Earlier on I mention the problem with the mechanistic world-view is that it can be seemingly imbibed without any idea that self-criticism is a valid and necessary

Your new view of "inevitability" pops up again …

Yes, and we should discuss that on another occasion. The question is how do we "diagnose" and "remedy" the obvious problems with the mechanistic world-view. I suppose it is possible to acknowledge these problems and to try and correct them on the basis of the same world-view. Yes, this is an issue we should discuss at a further time. But we must keep in mind that this mechanistic world-view is the credible way we sometimes argue about things with ourselves when we are considering the validity of some or other action. Yes. If we do not take this discussion in a self-critical way then there is indeed a danger that we are perpetuating the

problem we claim to be combating.

Before my cynicism is rendered completely vacuous let me try and explain things as I see them developing.

Go right ahead.

Urban planners motivated by a mechanistic world-view may well tend to suppress any memories they had of despair or hopelessness that their less successful fellow students feel. This is because a mechanistic world-view is imbued with a sense of inevitability based upon a view of physical causality. If there is a cause there has to be an effect and the billiard ball drops into the pocket. In terms of the mechanistic world-view there is nothing worse than failure! Lack of success means no through-put. I suggest that we should keep our minds open to the possibility that urban planners who are involved in planning and implementing large-scale restructuring of transport systems are very much imbued with the mechanistic world-view. I also suggest that it is at least feasible, if not likely, that they are motivated by a desire to forget the possibilities of their own failure. They may in fact be motivated to ignore the nagging doubts at the back of their mind about the value of their own (now exalted) part in the system because they fear the possibility that they are, in fact, merely cogs in a large impersonal machine. In other words they are really in it for the money and the power trip! But that is about all.

Yes. This is very useful.

The problem is that it seems to deliver us all into the hands of the psychologists.

Where the mechanistic *world-view* dominates it is possible that a mental reservation concerned with the planners' own existential fears drives social planners in their view of social reality. But by putting it in the way you have at least suggests that it is valid to stop and ask whether the restructured system is *in fact* directed at those who feel their "cog-like status" the most intensely ….

> *Or whether the program has been devised to keep the urban planners or the social welfare program organizers in work.*

And this is where we came in with your original sense of cynicism and futility. Let's now move on to explicitly discussing electronic tickets. If we are to develop and promote a *world-view* which is an alternative to the mechanistic one, then what better way than to start with something to hand? So as we look at the tickets we are also trying to understand social structure and reflect upon the world-view we bring to this social situation.

> *Are you not suggesting that the tickets are expressions of a mechanistic world-view? I can go along with that.*

No matter how much the planning and policies are directed by the narrow reductionism of a mechanistic world-view, sooner or later, human actors have to be included in the picture.

> *Yes like the Japanese station assistant who made a new rope handle for your suitcase. But is the mechanistic view is the opposite of a humanistic view then? Is that what you are wanting to say?*

No. Not exactly. After all the mechanistic view is in its own terms a view of the human condition. Why should we want to affirm the exact opposite of the mechanistic view? The problem of putting "humanistic" over against "mechanistic" is found in the rationale that such an opposition is "inevitable".

But why should a world-view be the logical opposite of another world-view?

This is another topic for another time. Back to ticketing please!

Engineers design the machines on the trams; designers put an artistic touch on the entire mechanism; artists draw up the shape and the colors of the tickets. Others make the advertising and print the tickets themselves. We can understand why it is somewhat easy to refer to humans "as if" they are mere cogs particularly if society is viewed as a system that is merely a matter of measurable inputs and outputs. But even in systems dominated by a mechanistic world-view there is always so much more than can be explained within the limits of a mechanical explanation. There are so many non-measurable and unpriceable aspects of this entire process that it seems surprising that anyone could hold a mechanistic world-view, which reduces everything to cause and effect. They would have to be blind, we might say, but we would have to be blind on a deeper level to assume that people do not hold to a mechanistic world-view in the face of a reality which to us might points in an altogether different direction.

I see. There are factors like ethical systems, or a commitment to scarcities that cannot be priced, which also drive a planner's proposals. It is, as you say, somewhat mysterious, that they are so repeatedly and easily forgotten and left out of the theoretical discussion when planning decisions have to be made. Why is it that a seemingly impersonal, arbitrary and unrelenting system results which requires that people be manipulated to do things that are objectively measurable.

It is a matter of people being trained to see things in this way. As a matter of fact this *world-view* can be seen in our schools and universities, in particular in relation to the

"marking on the curve" phenomenon. We see it dominating hospitals and the various modes of case-mix and the funding formulae that have been applied to the implementation of (so-called) integrated caring in public hospitals. And we also see it at work in public transport. Perhaps it is in relation to public transport that this *mechanistic* world-view makes one of its most powerful and evident contributions to the powerless and the fearful in our societies. After all, it is so often said that we are "on the move". This is the society that presupposes great movement on a daily, weekly and yearly basis. Everything is moving. If you are not moving, you are dead! Or so it seems.

> *I am getting it now. Those who are slower, or who cannot move, are being left behind! They cannot progress. They cannot get from A to B. Hence we see fast cars as a symbol of our success, of our ability to make things happen.*

A train, a tram and a car are all mechanisms as are the rails and roads on which they run. But then how is *traffic* itself to be understood? And how can traffic be *managed* in an efficient and effective manner? How is the mechanistic metaphor to be applied in transport and traffic planning? To what principle can we appeal to ensure that, in relation to traffic, the application of the mechanistic metaphor stays rightly within bounds? How do ensure that traffic is formed justly and is not just mechanistically reduced to being another aspect of an urban efficiency which is experienced as nihilistic inevitability?

> *So you are suggesting that as we look closely at the culture of public transport we can deepen our understanding about the direction our society is headed? I begin to see connection here with youth who want to "go out" – meaning exploring the spaces of public life!*

It is very important that urban planning, and the restructuring of urban life around the world, gain a better understanding of

the way world-views are presupposed by the planning process itself. Our society seems to generate a blindness to world-views.

Another way of saying this is to imply that transport systems are biased in favour of the "mobile rich"
.

That may be. But in developing public images through advertising, even the shape and lettering on ticket machines, a view is conveyed. What I am suggesting is that our life is so very complex and differentiated into different social domains. If we simply develop machines and schemes and programs without a close analysis of their impacts and possible impacts upon all in our society we are actually entertaining risks which are far too high. Some politicians talk about developing policies to arrest youth suicide, but will a new "caring stimulus" bring about the required "response". When you look carefully at what is being proposed it is clear that what is being suggested is a mere data-gathering exercise which can then, in time, demonstrate a reduction of youth suicide, on the basis of programs and policies newly funded under this new initiative. It becomes a case of demonstrating "social change" by means of statistics and other calculations. But, nihilism is a world-view and is not challenged by changing the statistics.

So we do not say that if we had a new ticketing system we would prevent social problems like youth suicide. You are saying that lots of things go together to make up a world-view; and if a ticketing mechanism is not distanced from the mechanistic world-view then it may contribute indirectly to the general atmosphere in which hopelessness and despair grows.

The connection is between the nihilistic and mechanistic world-view and suicide not between ticketing and the atmosphere of despair. Bringing back tram conductors on its own will not bring back hope. But if genuine hope is restored

then the re-introduction of tram conductors and many other actions on many other levels of society and youth culture may indeed inspire people. The problem is whether contemporary youth prone to consider suicide can find genuine hope in the world.

So cartoons on tram tickets won't change the situation, but they may give expression to change that has already "on the move". You make me think of the way in which trams and trains have been redecorated to encourage those who would otherwise use spray-cans for the purpose of graffiti and vandalism. This way their work goes "on show" legitimately. But when it doesn't bring about a change in underlying world-view, it plays into the hands of the reckless. Such a program, for all its positive worth, will confirm the crazy idea that life is only worth living if you can be on show. And what happens? Daring and stupid things become the thing to do and they end up killing themselves through efficient electrocution – the roof of a moving trains becomes the preferred mode of travel.

It is from this route that we begin to discuss transport and electronic ticketing. I have talked in terms of youth despair because our public transport system does give forceful expression to the public ways we seek to care for each other. Our planning must be such that we can encourage, rather than discourage, such mutual caring for all in our society, throughout our society.

Conversation Five

I don't think I can handle too long a session this time. You've given me a lot to think about. Can you try and sum up now perhaps?

Think about the images of our urban environment we live

with day by day.

I'm thinking

There are the images of the great bridges we build to carry an every increasing amount of car traffic. There are the massive underground train systems which shift millions in our industrial and post-industrial cities. In relation to these matters the pictures of own urban landscapes very often portray transport in a heroic role. By contrast despairing youth are portrayed, whether on roadways, railway stations or on the midnight last trains, in terms of personal failure and of a lack of control. *Both sets of images are integral to our urban experience and both should be considered in urban planning.* Electronic ticketing and youth despair do have an inner connection. It is not only in terms of an underlying world-view congruence. The connection is in how we build societies, how we think about them, and how we care or do not care for each other.

Let's try to sum up all that we have been saying here in some basic principles for our view of electronic ticketing. Can we find, perhaps, a non-despairing view of tram tickets, to have a positive impact upon social policy.

When I began writing this paper in May 1998, Melbourne was debating its new automated train and tram ticketing system- the so-called TravelCard which was then in the process of dispensing with the tram conductor whom many had said was a Melbourne institution.

But in the 18 months since then Melbourne's public transport focus has shifted away from the now seriously depleted tram and train service, to the new CityLink Tollway. The intense cynicism among Melbourne's commuters about public transport is now thoroughly interwoven with the recption of the new electronic *e-TAG* system.

And that is why you found me to be a useful

discussion partner?

The **TravelCard** and the **e-TAG** help us illustrate how a particular world-view contributes to the planning implied in the humble ticket. We have suggested that the new electronic ticketing is close to the heart of some of our deepest psychological and spiritual problems.

> *So you are on the side of management after all? Was all that went before this simply a way of getting us to accept your version of the latest management ideology?*

No. In this we have to face up to how the Osborne and Gaebler philosophy of "faster, cleaner, safer" has tended to co-opt all professions into being mere parts of a new management control over all sectors of the economy and over all professions.

> *You've already said that public transport tells us a lot about the values we hold in our society. I take that to mean that ticketing, in its own way, helps us identify important facets of the management of our urban life-styles. The patterns of daily behavior, mapped by the routes and time-tables of transport and public transport - buses, trains, trams, along with taxis and private vehicles - are also very much a part of this "system". In the framework of this private and public travel our social lives are formed and develop meaning.*

So here then are some of the basic principles we have been trying to identify through this discussion.

TWENTY PROPOSITIONS

1. Transport is social

All transport is social. In a complex differentiated society there are complex networks of social travel which are themselves differentiated. There are various social settings from which to study travel and transport. One such setting is the vehicle used for public transport and another is the transport centre, and another is the road upon which private vehicles make their way.

2. *Technology is an integral part of travel.*

This includes mechanical aids to travel, and the media by which travel is made possible. It is all part of the diverse technology of transport. Not only walking frames and motorised wheelchairs making travel available to disabled and elderly citizens. Travel technology is not only motorised machines but the engineering of ramps, paths, steps, roadways, tunnels and freeways.

3. Roads, railways, and pathways are part of the technology of transport

4. The just and economic funding and administration of roads and pathways, road systems and public transport networks is a necessary dimension of a complex differentiated society.

5. Electricity has assisted considerably in the modes of transport and also in its administration.

So traffic lights and warning systems for roads, train lines and tram lines provide good examples of how electricity is used to form social relations between drivers/vehicles and other vehicles and pedestrians. Traffic police and ticket inspectors have increased flexibility by the use of hand-held mobile phones. And so on. This is all very

positive.

6. *Electricity assists the efficient collection of a transport system's income*.

Yet this is where I wonder whether we are get into the brave new world stuff.

<u>The reason is that</u>

7. Electronic ticketing is a legitimate application of electricity to our lives.

The move to new electronic ticketing systems means new controls for security, safety and compliance. The evaluation of the governance of public travel in a complex, differentiated society requires an evaluation of the new possibilities brought into everyday life by electricity in terms of public justice.

8. Though trams, trains, buses and cars are integral to our public transport systems, it is human actors who are the primary players, both as engineers and as commuters.

There is a need for just administration, a fair sharing of costs and the assurance of just, safe travel minimizing risks as much as possible.

*Part of this administration means diverse "pieces of paper" – have you forgotten the bureaucracy? The registration and ownership papers of vehicles, driver's licenses, identification cards, parking permits and tickets, rates notices the upkeep of roads and also **e-TAG**s.*

Yes our sociological study of these artifacts need to consider them as integral to our experience of public transport which is fully embedded in the socially structured mosaic of relations between organisations, institutions and personal contacts. The tickets and other associated pieces of paper

also have a structure of their own requiring ongoing formation.

The next principle is

9. The structure of public transport systems must be conceptualised as a human device, which has been planned, formed and maintained. The view of its history must give due regard to its capacity for re-structuring.

So it is no anti-human thing.It is fully human because humans formed it, right? Generation to generation.

Historically, trains emerged when steam power replaced horses as the means for middle-distant travel of the emerging middle classes. Then trams and trolley-buses emerged when travel within a city, and its urban environment, modified the travel networks which had emerged from horse travel. Then the motor car emerged as a result of the internal combustion engine. And the use of these machines and devices also needs law. Free movement needs laws to govern and administer free movement.

I always thought your view was somewhat screwed up. But I suppose you are only looking at what happens. Go on.

As a result of the development of laws governing transport and travel

10. Travel tickets are a matter of social policy.
Different ticket systems developed through each separate means of transport - trains, trams and buses. In time and with the intensive development of train tracks, tram lines and bus routes through an increasing web of suburbs these different ticket systems merge as a comprehensive travel network between all media covers the urban network.

I can follow this.

I'm glad you're not asleep … yet. But as we study public transport we have to keep its development in view as well.

11. Public transport policy should develop an integrated system based upon a mutually efficient and effective funding of transport infra-structure. The needs of privatized motor transport must comes under review.
That toll-ways, as privatized road systems, have now re-emerged as a revenue raising possibility, indicate that transport policy is now viewed as something which is essentially private with a public function. I would suggest that transport is always an inherently public issue which does not rule out private rights but should be administer in terms of public justice and not just generated by new systems developed to serve private interest. The new feature of such private company toll-ways is that they aim to cater for the mass of commuters. In Melbourne in the 1990s an electronic ticketing system was introduced onto trams, trains and buses (with de-manned stations and the laying off of tram conductors). Now road transport around Melbourne has also been restructured with the CityLink project, a system of electronic scanners, holding out the promise of fast, efficient road travel.

And that is why I perceive that you are rather critical of these developments. But as you say, you want to match any cynicism with positive views that can make a real difference to how we think about public transport. I'm not sure you've solved the problems yet, though.

Theoretical views only solve conceptual and theoretical problems. The actual problems have to be solved by action, and policies that remedy situations that are chaotic and out of control. But to help us understand what we are doing it does help to recognise that

12. Tickets are cultural artifacts.

When we look at tickets in their social and historical context we can gain a clue to direction in which the entire society is being directed.

> *Sounds a bit like looking into a crystal ball if you ask me. Or are you suggesting some new age kind of comments on the back of our tickets which say: "Have a nice day!" Or as we go through a blue beam a voice clocks on and cheerily welcomes us to this part of CityLink?*

Not exactly. I don't think we return to an appropriate economic view by inflating sentimentalism and going in for mass-production of "cheer". We already do that and it doesn't really solve anything. This is because there are some things that are essential which are not able to be bought and sold.

13. True social cost includes unpriceable and non-priceable aspects.

> *But there are practices and policies which form our life "as if" they can be and they are a tyranny. I've learned that much. People with power use technology and new machines to make our lives a misery.*

But this is typically one-sided. Your analysis of the power problem needs to be understood in terms of a power vacuum generated by

> *…. the underlying world-view, as we have said.*

14. Technological innovation dominated by a mechanistic world-view will create a power vacuum.

> *You mean it is an ideology.*

Yes, and we can suggest that this ideology has not overstressed the mechanical metaphor, so much as having

given its heart to technique as the way to solve its problems. In fact this is view as the way to be truly human.

You mean it reduced everything to technique? Hmmm. There's a good angle from which to criticise the madness of advertising. Everything becomes technique and manipulation.

15. It is the ideology of technicism – or the mechanistic world-view – rather than technology itself that destroys social relations.
The mechanistic world-view implies that those with power have redesigned how people relate and how people should relate.

I have known all along you were a cynic.

That is not cynicism. That is identifying the spiritual direction our society is taking. Moreover this ideology of technicism coincides with ways in which economics is understood.

16. A mechanistic view of machines mized with rational choice theory in economics is dangerous because "total cost" is reduced to sums of money - cash, credit and debit; performance is reduced to what can be calculated.

<u>**And this is the reason that**</u>

17. A mechanistic world-view consistently mis-calculates the true value of social interaction

I warn you. No sentimentalism OK? No sloppy religious final appeals to conscience. No tears. No threats. Just keep it logical and rational.

18. There is a better way of viewing it and doing it, the way of a sociological perspective that respects the "distinctive integrity" of all social relations.
Recognising the inter-dependence of social actors will not to

reduce all of social life to individuals and their choices, or to discrete and separate "roles". "Trust" roles must be re-conceptualised in new situations where new technology and new forms of travel emerge.

I am slightly impressed.

19. "Distinctive integrity theory" develops a new view of the relation between independence and interdependence.

Just so long as you are not going to try to sell it to me.

And then we must also identify where our next discussion should go …

There is to be a next discussion? Don't you give up?

20. The next problem is to try and conceptualize the way in which social structures, inherently interdependent, are intwoven in an historical social fabric.
There's something to keep yourself busy in the next millenium.

That's all.

Is that it?

That's it.

No epilogue? What about a few last words on urban sociology? Go on. Give us one last conclusion. I won't interrupt. I want you to know I'm not totally cynical.

What can I say? "Distinctive integrity theory" develops a new view of the relation between independence and interdependence. To adequately conceptualise the

"distinctive integrity" of any and all social institutions, organisations and relationships a theory must reckon with both societal independence and societal interdependence. In a complex differentiated society like ours that is not possible without taking public transport and the variety thereof into account. Societal inter-dependence is a useful and important concept for other aspects of urban life as well

Talking about social inter-dependence - analyzing public transport as systems of social inter-dependence - is not "soft" or "romantic" but actually faces the hard and difficult reality that social life is a matter of the co-responsibility we all have for each other. It can also be used in relation to (other) "public spaces", rubbish collection, mail systems, delivery systems. A general theory of "inter-dependence" is important to the scientific analysis of urban society. This can be illustrated by some other "Melbourne suburban institutions" alongside tram conductors - rubbish bins and rubbish collectors, water, gas and electricity, and their service agents, pets and their owners, letter-boxes and postmen, as well as the usual homeowner's symbols of gates, fences, gardens, "nature strips", car parking, and back yard sheds. This also has a direct bearing upon the way we understand "public" and "private".

Sociology of fences and rubbish bins?

The struggle for trams and roads, and the struggle for bikes and walking, is also the struggle for a post-utilitarian and non-reductionistic view of societal movement. Public movement is political. It gives evidence of the way societal power is used to shape the life of the citizenry. Public movement may involve economic choices and it gives expression to how we use our personal and collective resources. Public movement is aesthetic and recreative and demonstrates the formation of an aesthetic societal fabric and life-style. Public movement is religious in that it gives expression to how people view the purpose of their life, how they understand themselves as moving from where they have come from (origins) to where they are (locations) to

where they anticipate ending up (eschaton).

> *I'm glad you said walking. That's important*
> *You've been at the computer long enough. Time*
> *to go for a walk beside the sea. Off you go.*

The "distinctive integrity" of each social relationship, institution and organisation needs to be respected when forming social policy of transport systems; this is the sound basis for an opened-up, economic and just alternative approach to public transport. We should develop theory and policy that considers any one social fact in terms other social facts in relation to a context of historically shaped institutions, organisations and relations.

Urban sociology has to find a way to think about the relation between societal integrity (independence) and societal interaction (inter-dependence) that truly respects who we are and the responsibilities we have for each other in all of our social life. The task of urban sociology in relation to urban transport and in particular trams at this time is to articulate a non-reductionistic view of public transport that honors the institutional and organisation fabric of all relationships of a complex differentiated society.

Then it can have a positive scientific contribution and counteract, by genuine scientific means, the injurious political and ideological impact of reductionistic policies and strategies of unreflective, uncritical dogma that passes for "political insight" these days. This principle applies equally to Australia and Japan but how it is worked out will be different in both countries because of differences in social structure, cultural understandings, and political traditions. But the call to justice and wise stewardship of our resources remains as integral part of our task of reflecting upon our urban lives and the transport systems in which we are embedded. It's in this context that our accountability is to be worked out.

Thanks. Did I need all that? I'm going for a walk.
You coming?

December 13-18, 1999.