

THE DAILY ASTORIAN

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City makes healthy decision on Astor

Paul Caruana is a private sector urban renewal agency

Urban renewal comes in many packages. Sometimes government does it. Sometimes nonprofit organizations are the engine.

Paul Caruana is something of a private sector urban renewal agency. Edward Stratton's Tuesday article describes the intensive makeover Caruana is giving the Astor Hotel.

The Astor caps a series of other projects. Caruana and his former partner Brian Faherty have brought new life to three other city blocks adjacent to the Astor Hotel. They renewed the Norblad Hotel and its larger building, they resurrected the Commodore Hotel and they created the Shark Rock building, which houses the Astoria Coop and a Providence Hospital clinic.

All of these projects have led to new economic activity for Astoria. The Commodore Hotel especially was a dead zone.

Jane Jacobs in her seminal work *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* established for a generation of city planners the critical importance of downtown housing and economic activity at

street level. Those are what revives downtown, said Jacobs.

A more lively street level occurred with the Commodore building and the addition of Street 14 Coffee. And now it is happening as Caruana improves storefronts and fills them at the base of the Astor Hotel.

The late Sen. Mark Hatfield accomplished the Astor's first resurrection by getting it approved for a federal housing program. A succession of owners took advantage of the tax breaks that come with that program. Caruana and Faherty's purchase of the Astor marked the first time ownership would be held by someone living here.

Significantly, the Astoria City Council has given Caruana permission to fill 50 percent of the Astor's units with tenants paying market rent. That kind of income mix is happening in larger cities, to healthy effect.

Warming spells threats to shellfish harvests

Archaeological digs show shellfish have been a culinary obsession for humans for tens of thousands of years. In our long centuries as hunter-gatherers, clams and other creatures of the surf zone were dependable sources of nutrition that could be easily harvested from the seashore by men, women and children.

Shellfish may even have played a key role in human evolution. A professor at the University of Toronto found signs that nutrients in shellfish led to our intelligence. "You don't need a big brain to collect mussels and clams. But living on them gives you the excess energy and nutrients that can then be directed towards brain growth."

Maybe it is some deeply ingrained hunger for shellfish and the experiences associated with harvesting them that continues to drive popularity of razor-clam digs in the Pacific Northwest. It's at least possible to say that many take profound satisfaction in this activity with very deep roots in the human experience, showing their kids the seashore and techniques that have kept us alive for hundreds of generations.

This means news about razor clams is closely followed by Oregon and Washington residents, including some who live hours away from the beach. This includes ongoing coverage of an algal bloom that created a marine toxin, closing the spring clam season and delaying start of fall digs.

Razor clams are more actively managed in Washington than in Oregon, a strategy that has proven successful in expanding clam populations and harvest opportunities.

Toxin testing also is a routine aspect of seashore management in Washington, in recent years providing a thorough public record of clam toxins. (www.tinyurl.com/WAMarineToxins) Before this spring, domoic acid last spiked in the summer of 2003. It is an algal-produced toxin that can permanently damage the ability to form memories, and other impacts from death to diarrhea.

Along with other toxins that become concentrated within algal-eating shellfish, researchers believe domoic acid will become more common as oceans warm and become more acidic. Delayed and canceled clam seasons cost millions on this coast, which sorely needs digging-related economic activity in the off-season.

Expansion of monitoring, research and public outreach is an essential response to harmful algal blooms. Where our ancestors may have noticed natural clues to the presence of toxins in shellfish — and were used to having shortened lives — clamming in the modern world requires accurate and timely information about shellfish safety. Newport-based scientists with NOAA have played key roles in studying this year's domoic acid breakout and will have a valuable part in future responses.

Ultimately, answers may include finding ways to turn off toxin production in otherwise beneficial algae, or learning to neutralize or remove the toxin from seafood destined for human consumption. We have to understand why the ocean sometimes produces toxins, and take steps to return it to health.

The university of spirituality

By DAVID BROOKS

New York Times News Service

Many American universities were founded as religious institutions, explicitly designed to cultivate their students' spiritual and moral natures.

But over the course of the 20th century they became officially or effectively secular.

Religious rituals like mandatory chapel services were dropped. Academic research and teaching replaced character formation at the core of the university's mission.

Administrators and professors dropped spiritual language and moral prescription either because they didn't know what to say or because they didn't want to alienate any part of their diversifying constituencies. The humanities departments became less important, while parents ratcheted up the pressure for career training.

Universities are more professional and glittering than ever, but in some ways there is emptiness deep down. Students are taught how to do things, but many are not forced to reflect on why they should do them or what we are here for. They are given many career options, but they are on their own when it comes to developing criteria to determine which vocation would lead to the fullest life.

But things are changing. On almost every campus faculty members and administrators are trying to stem the careerist tide and to widen the system's narrow definition of achievement. Institutes are popping up — with interdisciplinary humanities programs and even meditation centers — designed to cultivate the whole student: the emotional, spiritual and moral sides and not just the intellectual.

Technology is also forcing change. Online courses make the

transmission of information a commodity. If colleges are going to justify themselves, they are going to have to thrive at those things that require physical proximity. That includes moral and spiritual development. Very few of us cultivate our souls as hermits. We do it through small groups and relationships and in social contexts.

In short, for the past many decades colleges narrowed down to focus on professional academic disciplines, but now there are a series of forces leading them to widen out so that they leave a mark on the full human being.

The trick is to find a way to talk about moral and spiritual things while respecting diversity. Universities might do that by taking responsibility for four important tasks.

First, reveal moral options. We're the inheritors of an array of moral traditions. There's the Greek tradition emphasizing honor, glory and courage, the Jewish tradition emphasizing justice and law, the Christian tradition emphasizing surrender and grace, the scientific tradition emphasizing reason and logic, and so on.

Colleges can insist that students at least become familiar with these different moral ecologies. Then it's up to the students to figure out which one or which combination is best to live by.

Second, foster transcendent experiences. If a student spends four years in regular and concentrated contact with beauty — with poetry or music, extended time in a cathedral, serving a child with Down syndrome, waking up with loving friends on a mountain — there's a good chance something transcendent and imagination-altering will happen.

Third, investigate current loves and teach new things to love. On her great blog, Brain Pickings, Maria



David Brooks

Popova quotes a passage from Nietzsche on how to find your identity: "Let the young soul survey its own life with a view of the following question: 'What have you truly loved thus far? What has ever uplifted your soul, what has dominated and delighted it at the same time?'" Line up these revered objects in a row, Nietzsche says, and they will reveal your fundamental self.

To lead a full future life, meanwhile, students have to find new things to love: a field of interest, an activity, a spouse, community, philosophy or faith. College is about exposing students to many things and creating an aphrodisiac atmosphere so that they might fall in lifelong love with a few.

Fourth, apply the humanities. The social sciences are not shy about applying their disciplines to real life. But literary critics, philosophers and art historians are shy about applying their knowledge to real life because it might seem too Oprahesque or self-helpy. They are afraid of being prescriptive because they idolize individual choice.

But the great works of art and literature have a lot to say on how to tackle the concrete challenges of living, like how to escape the chains of public opinion, how to cope with grief or how to build loving friendships. Instead of organizing classes around academic concepts — 19th-century French literature — more could be organized around the concrete challenges students will face in the first decade after graduation.

It's tough to know how much philosophical instruction anybody can absorb at age 20, before most of life has happened, but seeds can be planted. Universities could more intentionally provide those enchanted goods that the marketplace doesn't offer. If that happens, the future of the university will be found in its original moral and spiritual mission, but secularized, and in an open and aspiring way.

We're the inheritors of an array of moral traditions.

Rise to the climate change crisis now

By THOMAS L. FRIEDMAN

New York Times News Service

With both China and India having just announced major plans to curb their carbon emissions, the sound you hear is a tipping point tipping.

Heading into the United Nations climate summit meeting in Paris in December, all the world's largest industrial economies are now taking climate change more seriously.

This includes the United States — except for some of the knuckleheads running to be our next president, which is not a small problem.

When, at CNN's GOP presidential debate, the moderator Jake Tapper read statements from Ronald Reagan's secretary of state George Shultz (who drives an electric car powered by solar panels on his home's roof) about how Reagan urged industry to proactively address ozone depletion, and why Shultz believes we should be just as proactive today in dealing with climate change, he got the usual know-nothing responses. Sen. Marco Rubio said, "We're not going to destroy our economy the way the left-wing government that we are under now wants to do," while Gov. Chris Christie opined of Shultz, "Listen, everybody makes a mistake every once in a while."

They sure do, and it's not Shultz, who has been wisely and courageously telling Republicans that the conservative thing to do now is to take out some insurance against climate change, because if it really gets rocking the results could be "catastrophic." Hurricane Sandy — likely amplified by warmer ocean waters — caused over \$36 billion in damage to Christie's own state, New Jersey, in 2012.

But hey, "stuff happens." There was time when we could tolerate this kind of dumb-as-we-

wanna-be thinking. But it's over. The next eight years will be critical for the world's climate and ecosystems, and if you vote for a climate skeptic for president, you'd better talk to your kids first, because you will have to answer to them later.

If you have time to read one book on this subject, I highly recommend the new *Big World, Small Planet*, by Johan Rockstrom, director of the Stockholm Resilience Center, and Mattias Klum, whose stunning photographs of ecosystem disruptions reinforce the urgency of the moment.

Rockstrom begins his argument with a reminder that for most of the Earth's 4.5-billion-year history its climate was not very hospitable to human beings, as it oscillated between "punishing ice ages and lush warm periods" that locked humanity into seminomadic lifestyles.

It's only been in the last 10,000 years that we have enjoyed the stable climate conditions allowing civilizations to develop based on agriculture that could support towns and cities. This period, known as the Holocene, was an "almost miraculously stable and warm interglacial equilibrium, which is the only state of the planet we know for sure can support the modern world as we know it." It finally gave us "a stable equilibrium of forests, savannahs,

coral reefs, grasslands, fish, mammals, bacteria, air quality, ice cover, temperature, fresh water availability and productive soils."

"It is our Eden," Rockstrom added, and now "we are threatening to push Earth out of this sweet spot," starting in the mid-1950s, when the Industrial Revolution reached most of the rest of the globe and populations and middle classes exploded. That triggered "the great acceleration" of industrial and farming growth, which has put all of Earth's ecosystems under stress. The



Thomas L. Friedman

impacts now are obvious: "climate change, chemical pollution, air pollution, land and water degradation ... and the massive loss of species and habitats."

The good news is that in this period many more of the world's have-nots have escaped from poverty. They've joined the party. The bad news, says Rockstrom, is that "the old party" cannot go on as it did. The Earth is very good at finding ways to adapt to stress: oceans and forest absorb the extra CO₂; ecosystems like the Amazon adapt to deforestation and still provide rain and fresh water; the Arctic ice shrinks but does not disappear. But eventually we can exhaust the planet's adaptive capacities.

We're sitting on these planetary boundaries right now, argues Rockstrom, and if these systems flip from one stable state to another — if the Amazon tips into a savannah, if the Arctic loses its ice cover and instead of reflecting the sun's rays starts absorbing them in water, if the glaciers all melt and cannot feed the rivers — nature will be fine, but we will not be.

"The planet has demonstrated an impressive capacity to maintain its balance, using every trick in its bag to stay in the current state," explains Rockstrom. But there are more and more signs that we may have reached a saturation point. Forests show the first signs of absorbing less carbon. The oceans are rapidly acidifying as they absorb more CO₂, harming fish and coral. Global average temperatures keep rising.

This is what will greet the next president — a resilient planet that could once absorb our excesses at seemingly no cost to us, suddenly tipping into a saturated planet, sending us "daily invoices" that will get bigger each year. When nature goes against you, watch out.

"For the first time, we need to be clever," says Rockstrom, "and rise to a crisis before it happens," before we cross nature's tipping points. Later will be too late. We elect a president who ignores this science at our peril.

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