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## *The Need for Purpose*

### *Why We Have to Ask ‘Why?’*

If you ask any audience – of, say, teachers or parents – the question *What is learning for?*, their immediate reaction is likely to be that it is a very silly question; surely the answer is obvious.

On reflection, they soon recognise that it is anything but obvious. We do not have established current answers. To paraphrase Neil Postman, educators were once known for providing reasons for learning; now they become famous for inventing a method.<sup>1</sup> Public debates about education – some of which are hot and polarised – have chiefly revolved around a set of second-order questions:

- *what* should be taught
- *how* it should be taught
- *to whom* (who gets access to what?)
- *how* it should be structured
- *how* it should be paid for

These are all important questions. Perhaps, in times of stability and continuity, they are the ones to focus on. However, those are not our times.

Mass education systems, the first of which emerged in the middle of the nineteenth century in order to serve the needs of the Industrial Revolution, are under intense strain. This is true of most services that the state plays a key role in providing. The disjuncture between the ideal of a public system that provides similarly for all citizens, and the complex and diverse citizenry and goals existent in such systems, creates a perception that public systems are failing the public.

In education, this perception has given rise to what is criticised as the Global Education Reform Movement – or ‘GERM’.<sup>2</sup> This reform movement takes the view that the existing model of schooling is essentially sound, but can be enhanced by a mix of better trained

<sup>1</sup> Postman, *The End of Education*.      <sup>2</sup> Sahlberg, *Finnish Lessons 2.0*.

teachers and greater use of technology; basically, this view argues that 'school improvement' just needs to be done better.<sup>3</sup> At the other end of the continuum is the view that 'schooling' needs to be disrupted entirely, and that technology in the hands of learners will render schools obsolete. According to this view, 'schooling' is close to being over (and possibly the sooner the better), and learning will be disintermediated, just as many industries already have been.<sup>4</sup> On this view, the de-schoolers of the 1960s were basically right, just ahead of their time. The liberating power of the digital revolution makes their vision a realistic possibility.

Between these two viewpoints is the view that schooling needs to be re-designed, re-imagined. A new paradigm is needed and is overdue; but this book argues that schools as community institutions have a vital role if we are truly to thrive.

The outcomes of the school improvement movement have not done much to persuade critics that it can address the manifest failings of mass schooling systems *even on their own terms*. As Payne so succinctly states: 'So much reform, so little change.'<sup>5</sup>

What are these failings? They include:

- learner disengagement
- the growing costs of the current system with flat-lining gains on existing outcome metrics
- frustrated, unfulfilled education professionals (who are often not treated as professionals)
- little impact on inequality
- profound mismatch with the needs of societies and economies.

These are well documented elsewhere,<sup>6</sup> but the most recent rounds of international surveys provide a contemporary picture. Since 2000, the vast majority of OECD countries have seen no improvement in students' skills as measured by the Programme of International Student

<sup>3</sup> Barber and Mourshed, 'How the World's Best-Performing School Systems Come Out on Top'; Tucker, *Leading High-Performance School Systems*.

<sup>4</sup> Khan, *The One World Schoolhouse*; Christensen, Johnson and Horn, *Disrupting Class*.

<sup>5</sup> Payne, *So Much Reform, So Little Change*.

<sup>6</sup> Claxton, *What's the Point of School?*; Mehta and Fine, *In Search of Deeper Learning: The Quest to Remake the American High School*; OECD, *Education Policy Outlook 2015 – Making Reforms Happen*.

Assessment (PISA). Of all the OECD countries, only Portugal has seen sustained improvement in reading, maths and science.<sup>7</sup> In the ten years since PISA last assessed reading (2009–2018), only six countries – Georgia and Montenegro – saw improvement in the performance of low-socio-economic status (SES) students such that they reduced the gap with high-SES students.<sup>8</sup> This was in a period where almost all countries had reducing educational inequalities as a goal.<sup>9</sup> Among teachers, fewer than one third agree that ‘the teaching profession is valued in society’.<sup>10</sup> Meanwhile, for students themselves, roughly a third of 15-year-olds across the OECD say that they have no clear sense of meaning in their life, rising to almost half in the UK.<sup>11</sup> That represents a third of 32 million 15-year-olds, who have each spent approximately 10,000 hours in school.<sup>12</sup> That is a lot of time to spend not working out what you care about.

This book argues that one of the reasons for the apparent failure of the school improvement movement is that it is addressing the wrong purposes. To remedy this problem, we need to engage deeply with the questions of what those purposes need to become. The critical questions are:

- What should be the new purpose of mass education systems in the unfolding conditions of the twenty-first century?
- Where are educators addressing the question and what does it look like?

## 1.1 New Purposes for Our Time

Philosophers of education, from Aristotle to Confucius, Comenius to Freire, proposed purposes for education relevant to their time. The fundamental contention of this book is that our time, the mid-twenty-

<sup>7</sup> OECD, *PISA 2018 Results Volume I: What Students Know and Can Do*.

<sup>8</sup> OECD, *PISA 2018 Results Volume II: Where All Students Can Succeed*, 56–58.

<sup>9</sup> OECD, *TALIS 2018 Results (Volume I) – Teachers and School Leaders as Lifelong Learners*, 98.

<sup>10</sup> OECD, *TALIS 2013 Results, An International Perspective on Teaching and Learning*, 98.

<sup>11</sup> OECD, *PISA 2018 Results Volume III: What School Life Means For Students’ Lives*, 165–167.

<sup>12</sup> The average school year across the OECD is 183 days (185 in primary), 5.0 hours per day (4.2 in primary). Students sitting PISA are typically in year ten or eleven of their schooling.

first century, presents unprecedented challenges – some of which are existential – together with stupendous opportunities that demand new purposes of education.

There is increasing consensus about the nature of these challenges, which are discussed in Chapter 3. Taken together they mean that today our species and its home planet stand on the brink of changes that, within the lifetimes of today's young learners, may change them forever. The changes are complex, which makes them all the harder to grasp. Professor Klaus Schwab, Founder and Executive Chairman of the World Economic Forum (WEF), sets out his view of the problem in 2016:

The changes are so profound that, from the perspective of human history, there has never been a time of greater promise or potential peril. My concern, however, is that decision makers are too often caught in traditional, linear (and non-disruptive) thinking or too absorbed by immediate concerns to think strategically about the forces of disruption and innovation shaping our future.<sup>13</sup>

'Traditional, linear thinking' is exactly what prevails in education today. To take *advantage* of what is now possible, as well as to adapt to the changes that may be inevitable, we need to take this view seriously.

So, it is vital that we address afresh the questions of purpose – and in a way that is grounded in a developed, evidence-based picture of the emerging world, as opposed to being locked in the past. Without doing so, we cannot set a course for the direction of change. And without that, we cannot agree on models, curricula, pedagogies and assessments and all the other structural issues about which we currently obsess. Thomas Jefferson was surely right when he observed that the purpose of public education was not to serve the public but to *create* a public. For his time, that needed to be the focus. However, circumstances are transformed; consequently, this book takes as a starting point the stance adopted by Neil Postman in 1996:

The question is not, Does or doesn't public schooling create a public? The question is, What kind of public does it create? A conglomerate of self-indulgent consumers? ... Indifferent, confused citizens? Or a public imbued with confidence, a sense of purpose, a respect for learning, and tolerance?

<sup>13</sup> Schwab, *The Fourth Industrial Revolution*, 2–3.

The answer to this question has nothing whatever to do with computers, with testing, with teacher accountability, with class size, and with the other details of managing schools. The right answer depends on two things and two things alone: the existence of shared narratives and the capacity of such narratives to provide an inspired reason for schooling.<sup>14</sup>

In 1996, Postman's narrative was profoundly humanist, and it continues to be relevant today. He argued for the elevation of a sense of global citizenship and healthy intellectual scepticism. He also argued for an appreciation of diversity. He could not have known that within 20 years, there would be a series of technological, ecological and biological revolutions that would transform the landscape and require a rethink of the 'shared narrative' to address these conditions. The rise in many parts of the West of successful populist demagoguery, with scant regard for truth or evidence, has sent a chilling warning about the fragility of liberal democracy. If faint hopes of 'respect for learning, and tolerance' feel too weakly optimistic today, they must be replaced with something vital and new.

## 1.2 The Need for New Narratives

This book argues that without refreshed purposes, we will not find the level of collective energy, creativity and focus to create the shifts needed at a *system* level. For the most part, across the world, education renewal is going on in spite of system conditions, not because of them. The work of inspirational educators at the practice level, which is explored in this book, is energised and shaped by their clarity of contemporary purpose. They do not look to systems to guide and support them. Generally, their stories are of finding some space to act, managing the constraints and accountabilities to which they are subject.

It is from the work of these educators that it is possible to see that schools *can* face up to the challenges of this new epoch for the species and the planet; they point the way. Moreover, these schools demonstrate good grounds for arguing that the institution of a 'school' – in the sense of a dedicated community coming together regularly, face-to-face, united in learning – *ought* to survive; and that we should not be seduced by the 'death of school' techno-solutionists. Still, the new

<sup>14</sup> Postman, *The End of Education*.

narrative proposed will entail re-invention of these institutions. The good news is: around the world we see successful examples in action. The bad news is: most public systems still ignore or resist learning from them.

For change to become systemic, we need a new narrative about education's purpose that is authentic, based on evidence of our predicament and in tune with our deepest values. Everything starts with the story we tell about ourselves.

### 1.3 The Stories So Far ...

#### *It's the Economy, Stupid*

It is a key task of political leaders to create narratives for their public. These narratives are often what are contested in elections, far more than the technical solutions to whatever specific problems need to be addressed. They are about identity and direction. Arguably, with the renaissance of populism, the dominant narratives have become shorter and less sophisticated: 'Make America Great Again'; 'Take Back Control'; 'Turn Back the Boats'. These are not complicated arguments. Their appeal is partly their simplicity, but also their capturing of notions of identity and social direction.

Education rarely enjoys much of a place in the broad pictures painted by political leaders, other than as an addendum. When we look to identify the dominant narratives around education among politicians today, we see an extraordinary convergence of message and rhetoric.

Predominantly, the message is this: education is what enables individuals to be successful and nations to compete to ensure economic growth. This is only common sense, right?

In 1995 Tony Blair, capturing the zeitgeist, said, 'Education is the best economic policy there is.'<sup>15</sup> Neo-liberalism has become the dominating political framework in the West. So pervasive has it become that it is scarcely even recognised as an ideology. It is seen as neutral, almost as a natural law.

Neo-liberalism sees competition as the defining characteristic of human relations. Citizens are defined primarily as consumers, whose

<sup>15</sup> Blair, 'Leader's Speech'.

democratic choices can be best exercised by buying and selling. Efforts to secure more equal societies are inimical to liberty, and futile. The market will see to it.

In addition, economic growth has become the fundamental underpinning rationale. Occasionally, a dash of ‘personal development and citizenship’ rhetoric is added to the mix. But the central story has been one of economic growth through competition in the globalised economy, leading to more jobs as well as increased national and personal prosperity – all in a virtuous circle.

Education has become a sort of global arms race, from ‘A Nation At Risk’ in 1980s America to the contemporary triennial media fair over PISA results. Indeed, in the same speech, Blair went on to couch the issue explicitly in those terms:

The arms race may be over; the knowledge race has begun and we will never compete on the basis of a low-wage, sweat shop economy . . . . Education does not stop when you walk out of the school gates for the last time. Education must be for life. This is hard economics.

Twenty years on, even that most thoughtful of politicians, Barack Obama, was drawn into presenting education primarily within the frame of economic competition. Speaking in 2010, he said:

In a single generation, we've fallen from first place to 12th place in college graduation rates for young adults [but . . .] we can retake the lead. The single most important thing we can do is to make sure we've got a world-class education system for everybody. That is a prerequisite for prosperity.<sup>16</sup>

Speaking to the same reporter, the then Secretary of Education, Arne Duncan, evoked the spirit of past competitions:

We got a little self-satisfied and other countries have, I think, out-worked us. They have out-invested. They have taken this more seriously, and I think this is a wake-up call.

Where education becomes any kind of focus for political debate, it is generally framed in promises to raise ‘standards’ by finding more money (and/or greater efficiency) improving buildings, and increasing access to tertiary education.

<sup>16</sup> de Nies, ‘President Obama Outlines Goal to Improve College Graduation Rate in U.S.’

Another feature of neo-liberalism is that universal competition relies upon universal quantification and comparison.<sup>17</sup> The result is that, in many jurisdictions, education (along with other public services) is subject to a stifling regime of accountability assessment.<sup>18</sup> The philosophy of neo-liberalism promises freedoms, but these do not materialise for educators.

Irrespective of what is to be found in state curriculum documents, the majority of education planning and policy is carried out under the purpose essentially encapsulated by human capital theory.<sup>19</sup> Investment in humans leads to a return on that investment, both to economies (in terms of growth) and to individuals (higher incomes).<sup>20</sup> Clearly, many young people have believed in this narrative: everywhere applications for higher education have increased<sup>21</sup> – in many contexts at the cost of soaring student debt.<sup>22</sup>

It is important to recognise how firm a grip economics – or an out-of-date version of the discipline – has on the public imagination and mindset.<sup>23</sup> As F. S. Michaels remarks in her book *Monoculture: how one story is changing everything*:

In these early decades of the twenty-first century, the master story is economic: economic beliefs, values and assumptions are shaping how we think, feel and act.<sup>24</sup>

How has it come to pass that this discipline, with its poor predictive power and increasingly challenged foundations, has assumed this dominance? It would perhaps be less troublesome were it not for the fact that the pre-eminent model was set out in the textbooks of the 1950s, themselves rooted in the theories of 1850. The infiltration into our very language is clear: it is deemed acceptable to talk of ‘natural capital’ when we mean forests, fields and oceans; or of ‘human capital’ when we mean people.

<sup>17</sup> Espeland and Sauder, *Engines of Anxiety; Power, The Audit Society*.

<sup>18</sup> Lingard et al., *Globalizing Educational Accountabilities*.

<sup>19</sup> Klees, ‘A Quarter Century of Neoliberal Thinking in Education’.

<sup>20</sup> Becker, *Human Capital; a Theoretical and Empirical Analysis, with Special Reference to Education*.

<sup>21</sup> Marginson, ‘The Worldwide Trend to High Participation Higher Education’.

<sup>22</sup> Chamie, ‘Student Debt Rising Worldwide’; [finaid.org/loans/studentloandebtclock/](https://finaid.org/loans/studentloandebtclock/)

<sup>23</sup> Kwak, *Economism*. <sup>24</sup> Michaels, *Monoculture*.



However, the inadequacies of human capital theory as a basic underpinning for education's purposes are becoming increasingly apparent. Foremost among its critics are those with a humanistic perspective. But it is economists themselves who are now raising questions about human capital theory as an adequate basis for education. In particular, some point out that, for many, the human capital approach has amounted to a kind of con.

### *Economists Take on the Dominant Economic Narrative*

In *The Global Auction* Philip Brown, Hugh Lauder and David Ashton argue that the bargain between individuals and governments has been that both will take on high levels of debt, on the understanding that both society as a whole and the individuals concerned will be well rewarded.<sup>25</sup> But the bargain has not been kept. The rewards traditionally associated with middle-class status have been appropriated by a shrinking subset of society, leaving most at an increasing disadvantage.<sup>26</sup> University-educated workers compete for a diminishing pool of opportunities. This is linked to the global financial crisis of 2008; easy credit and the rising cost of real estate became substitutes for employment-driven prosperity.<sup>27</sup>

Notwithstanding skill gaps in certain sectors, there are not likely to be enough high value-added, knowledge-based jobs created to absorb the supply of university-educated workers.<sup>28</sup> At the time of writing, it seems highly likely that this will be exacerbated by the projected levels of unemployment due to COVID-19. Significant numbers of learners will no longer reap the expected benefits of educational qualifications: employment and the promise of a better future. Disillusion is growing across a number of countries with regard to education being an effective vehicle for social mobility and greater well-being.<sup>29</sup> Around the world, the hope for upward social mobility, spurred by the massive expansion of access to educational opportunities since the 1990s, is now diminishing.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>25</sup> Brown, Lauder and Ashton, *The Global Auction*.

<sup>26</sup> Reeves, *Dream Hoarders*. <sup>27</sup> Streeck, *Buying Time*.

<sup>28</sup> Susskind, *A World without Work*. <sup>29</sup> Markovits, *The Meritocracy Trap*.

<sup>30</sup> The Sutton Trust, 'Social Mobility and Education: Academic Papers Presented at a High Level Summit Sponsored by the Carnegie Corporation of New York and

Analyses of recent elections in the West highlight the rise of a new educational ‘cleavage’ – a dividing line in political support – between those with and without university degrees.<sup>31</sup> As education has become for some an identity or mark of success, for others it is an exclusive world, of which they are not seeing the benefit.<sup>32</sup> We have clearly drifted some way from the ideal of education as a public good.

In response to these changes, young people are beginning to question the ‘return on investment’ of traditionally high status educational routes. On the question of education’s contribution to ‘growth’, there has always been strong scepticism from economists.<sup>33</sup> Even in low-income countries, where systematic reviews of the evidence suggest a clearer economic pay-off to investing in education and skills,<sup>34</sup> there is scepticism about the wisdom of continuing to import the model of other countries. A recent study by the Brookings Institute shows that if the current schooling model is pursued in low-income countries, it will take another 100 years for children to reach the basic education levels present in the high-income world today.<sup>35</sup> In the last analysis, the system of formal education transplanted to low-income countries from the rich is self-defeating as a means of achieving development.

### *And Anyhow: What Is ‘Growth’?*

So even economists are unsure of defining education in fundamentally economic terms. However, what is most unsound about the prevalent political response, in the contemporary conditions we face, is what is taken to be the unquestioned good – *growth* – and how that is defined. It has become the primary and overriding objective of the vast majority of global, national and business plans. Growth as a metaphor for prosperity has become deeply embedded through language. We like to see our children grow, or our gardens. Growth seems fundamental

the Sutton Trust’; Volante and Jerrim, ‘Why a Good Education Isn’t Always the Key to Social Mobility’; Narayan et al., *Fair Progress?*

<sup>31</sup> Hendrickson and Galston, ‘The Educational Rift in the 2016 Election’; Surridge, ‘What Lies behind the UK’s New Political Map?’

<sup>32</sup> Goodhart, *The Road to Somewhere*.

<sup>33</sup> Wolf, *Does Education Matter?*; Blaug, *The Economics of Education and the Education of an Economist*.

<sup>34</sup> Hawkes, Ugur, and EPPI-Centre, *Evidence on the Relationship between Education, Skills and Economic Growth in Low-Income Countries*.

<sup>35</sup> McGivney and Winthrop, ‘Why Wait 100 Years?’

to life and progress. But there is another end of the metaphor: that growth can be cancerous.

Despite the widespread adoption of the goal of economic growth for education, the concept of growth has never been more contested. Drawing from a vast range of sources and disciplines, the scientist and policy analyst Vaclav Smil shows how growth has been both an unspoken as well as an explicit aim of our individual and collective striving.<sup>36</sup> But he demonstrates how, now, growth must have limits: only limits on a planetary scale will secure the survival of our civilisation.

If it is to be used as the ultimate arbiter for policy decisions, and in particular for guiding the direction of learning, we had better be clear about what exactly growth means. In terms of national economies, it is conventionally measured as the per cent rate of increase in real gross domestic product (GDP). GDP was created as a metric by the Nobel prize-winning economist, Simon Kuznets, in 1934, and came into use as a measure of nations' economies in 1944. It used to be roughly correlated with the increase in the number of jobs and the size of average personal incomes. Ironically, it was Kuznets himself who cautioned against the profligate use of the measure beyond a limited utility:

The valuable capacity of the human mind to simplify a complex situation in a compact characterization becomes dangerous when not controlled in terms of definitely stated criteria. With quantitative measurements especially, the definiteness of the result suggests, often misleadingly, a precision and simplicity in the outlines of the object measured. Measurements of national income are subject to this type of illusion and resulting abuse, especially since they deal with matters that are the center of conflict of opposing social groups where the effectiveness of an argument is often contingent upon oversimplification.<sup>37</sup>

Such an oversimplification has indeed occurred; perhaps more than Kuznets could have imagined. His own criticisms have gone unheeded.

The definition of GDP matters profoundly for education because it shapes the political world's sense of what is valuable. Kuznets himself

<sup>36</sup> Smil, *Growth*.

<sup>37</sup> Division of Economic Research, 'National Income, 1929–1932: Letter from the Acting Secretary of Commerce Transmitting in Response to Senate Resolution No. 220 (72nd Congress) a Report on National Income, 1929–32'.

pointed out a further flaw in the GDP calculation: it does not assign any economic value to the work of care – usually by women in the home. That is *the work which enables the very young and sometimes the helpless to be cared for*. Therefore, housework counts towards GDP when it is paid, but excluded when it is free of charge. As Paul Samuelson, an economist, pointed out, a country's GDP falls when a man marries his maid. Economists are increasingly critiquing the concept of GDP as a proxy for our overall welfare. In *The World After GDP*, Lorenzo Fioramonte points out that a purchase of heroin or an hour of paid sex appears as a plus; 15 hours of volunteer work counts for nothing.<sup>38</sup> Ignoring unpaid work also misrepresents the significance of certain economic activity. Raising well-cared for children is arguably at least as important as building cars. In 2016, for the first time, the UK Office of National Statistics put a value on this unpaid work for the country: £1 trillion.<sup>39</sup> This is excluded from calculations of the national GDP.

It is the environmentalists though who have supplied the most devastating objections to the continuing use of GDP as a measure of real 'growth'. Al Gore points out that growing GDP no longer increases real prosperity nor a sense of well-being; however, it is strongly correlated with the incomes of elites.<sup>40</sup> GDP is based on an absurd set of calculations that exclude any consideration of distribution of income, depletion of essential resources and the reckless spewing of harmful waste into the atmosphere, oceans, rivers, soil and the biosphere. The cost of pollution is not subtracted when calculating GDP; but the cost of the activity of cleaning up pollution is added. Manufactured 'wants' lead to rises in consumption, which in turn is equated with happiness or 'prosperity'. The United States has tripled its economic outcome over the last 50 years with no gains being measured in the general public's sense of well-being.<sup>41</sup> As *The Financial Times* reported in 2016, the average German today owns 10,000 objects, while the average British household owns £4,000 worth of clothes, a third of which will not have been worn over the

<sup>38</sup> Fioramonti, *The World After GDP*.

<sup>39</sup> ONS, 'Changes in the Value and Division of Unpaid Care Work in the UK'.

<sup>40</sup> Gore, *The Future*.

<sup>41</sup> Kahneman and Deaton, 'High Income Improves Evaluation of Life but Not Emotional Well-Being'.

past year.<sup>42</sup> Having only been widely recognised in the early 2000s, ‘oniomania’, compulsive buying disorder, has been identified in 5–15 per cent of the US and UK population.<sup>43</sup> Many are now responding by trying to ‘be more with less’.<sup>44</sup>

The GDP measure takes no account of leisure time, meaning that two countries might have equal GDP but one has workers toiling for 12-hour days and the other only eight. Large amounts of output captured by GDP are also wasteful, such as the hundreds of thousands of tonnes of food wasted in Britain each year, or the Christmas jumpers bought for one day, only to degrade in landfill for centuries.

The context in low-income countries is of course different in that they still have a long way to go to satisfy the basic needs of their citizens. However, emulating the high-income world model is clearly disastrous. Unsustainable patterns of production and consumption point to fundamental contradictions in a dominant model of development that is focused on economic growth. As a consequence of unhindered fossil fuel use and over-exploitation of natural areas, climate heating is producing an increase in natural disasters, already facing poor countries particularly with enormous challenges and even greater risk in the future. As manifested in the Sustainable Development Goals and the United Nations 2030 commitments, sustainability has emerged as the central development concern in the face of the climate emergency, the degradation of vital natural resources such as water, and the loss of biodiversity.<sup>45</sup>

### *Economic ‘Growth’ and Ill-Health*

The model of consumption exported from the ‘developed’ world is impacting not only planetary sustainability but human health patterns. Already, the epidemic of diabetes caused by obesity (now affecting 1 in 11 of all adults across the world) has spread from being a ‘first-world’ problem to a serious problem in the lower-income economies – even

<sup>42</sup> Spang, ‘Thing Theory’.

<sup>43</sup> Lee and Mysyk, ‘The Medicalization of Compulsive Buying’; Maraz, Griffiths and Demetrovics, ‘The Prevalence of Compulsive Buying’.

<sup>44</sup> Carver, *Project* 333.

<sup>45</sup> UNESCO, ‘UNESCO Moving Forward the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development; 2017’.

where there is acute hunger.<sup>46</sup> As Yuval Harari points out, humans today are more at risk of obesity than starvation.<sup>47</sup> If the high-income world is reaching 'peak stuff', the model of growth is still clung to and even exported. When societies lack the basics, it is reasonable for economies to focus on how to produce more stuff, and to measure that form of growth. But we need to shift from old notions of 'growth' to that of value. And what people really hold dear is not being captured by current yardsticks.

The discipline of economics is not the problem here. It is important to clarify this because critics of an economistic worldview are often painted as unpragmatic or untechnical, even anti-science. The goal of economics as a discipline – determining how we can produce and distribute enough resources to survive – is more important than ever. But economists themselves now point out that this work is now too often loaded with unnecessary and inaccurate assumptions, leading to what Kwak calls 'economism' as opposed to economics.<sup>48</sup> In economist Thomas Sedlacek's terms, we need more 'humanomics': an understanding of how to produce and distribute that takes into account humanity's moral principles.<sup>49</sup> This inquiry is related to, but bigger than, the question that Aristotle originally posed: how are humans to live happy lives? Aristotle's response was that happiness resulted from deploying our human intelligence to act creatively. As we shall see in Chapter 3, this dynamic has become, in the twenty-first century, an infinitely more complex one.

<sup>46</sup> WHO, *Global Report on Diabetes*.      <sup>47</sup> Harari, *Homo Deus*.

<sup>48</sup> Kwak, *Economism*.      <sup>49</sup> Sedlacek, *Economics of Good and Evil*.