

The Socrates Blog from July 7 Year 1

Luke's Blog

7 July Year 1

I'm flattered to be included in the six-blog team but wonder if I have anything of real value to contribute. I mentioned my grief earlier. When Frieda wrote yesterday of her vision of humanity spreading, all I could feel as I read it was pain and mental 'maybe'. Everything inside of me cries out that I don't want to be part of it.

Luke's blog 2 for the day

7 July Year 1

I'd like to make the occasional blog. I do realise that my age and generation does give me a different perspective.

Timothy's blog

7 July Year 1

Before I make a response to Luke's postings today, I want to pick up on something Frieda reported John as saying yesterday and I've been thinking about overnight. "Nothing happens here on a day-to-day basis". I wonder if John is registering something we should become aware of. These last six months have overwhelmed our senses with newness, as John commented in launching these blogs. Now, though, routines have been established and the newness has gone from our daily round. We are starting to have some spare energy, of which this blog is a sign. As I thought about what John said, I wondered whether our number-one enemy of the future is going to be boredom and lack of outlet for spare energy. Then this morning I read Luke's two brief postings. Back on Earth, Luke could be assuaging his pain in activities like golf, fishing or surfing TV channels. Perhaps more potently, he could be doing these and other things simply to get away and be himself and let the world go by. Here it is not just the constriction of options, it is the expectation that, simply because he is "retired", that he plays a valuable role in the community. After all, this is why a group of older people were deliberately chosen to join the expedition. It was not for their own sakes but for the community's sake so on Luke rests this community expectation that his grief makes difficult for him to meet. He is in negative feedback mode and the consequences of him are that the tedium, the emptiness, grows daily more and more intense. I know he is not the only one feeling this but no one has been noticing because all of us have been so caught up in the excitement and stimulus of the situation.

To be frank, whether it is for Luke and others like him, or for the general for tedium to set in, I don't have an answer. I can pronounce platitudes and conventional nostrums but lack conviction that the old conventions and ways are going to work. No group of humans have ever before been in a situation such as we face.

Madam Lu's blog***7 July Year 1***

Tedium! Am I hearing correctly?! Did you read my blog yesterday, Timothy? If anyone has got spare energy, come my way. I'm outraged at the thought!

Luke's blog 3rd for the day***7 July Year 1***

Whoa there, both Bishop Timothy and Mme Lou. You're both right and you're both wrong. Madam Lu, you see the huge external challenges combined with our acute shortage of human resource and are outraged that anyone could be bored. Timothy, you see into our hearts and spirits and see the turmoil of feelings, the alienation and dislocation, the shattering of all the old ways and certainties and how, as you wrote this morning, the constrictions of life here and the prospect of endless and unrelieved routine could sap our will to live.

But Mme Lu, the grand schemes and challenges that fill you don't touch us or if they do they are so beyond our grasp that we cannot begin to engage with them. I too had grand visions for my role as one of the "elders" in this society, with time to reflect and perhaps be wise. Instead of reflective silence, I simply experience numbness and where I hoped would be wisdom, only emptiness. I feel, to be frank, a useless burden to the colony, a mouth to be fed with little gain.

You, Timothy, though, are in danger of letting our feelings over-dominate us. Maybe I am being unfair, but I felt a surge of anger when you said you didn't have an answer. If you don't have an answer then, by God, we are in real strife. It seems to me that if the spiritual means anything at all, it is that it gets us out of our feelings. If you can't offer that then get out of the way.

Frieda's blog***7 July Year 1***

Yo, Luke! Kick butt man. Now you're talking. You don't have to go looking for wisdom -- you're wise, man. Lu and Timothy -- take notice. He's got the measure of both of you.

Timothy's blog 2 for the day***7 July Year 1***

I'm with Frieda in this, Luke. You kicked my butt. I'm not going to say I deserved it and I don't withdraw anything I said but you've just past a Rubicon and I am willing to join your ranks.

Okay. You asked for clear direction from the bishop. The response is clear and simple: give thanks. That means you, Luke. You give thanks for coming on this voyage. You give thanks that Lucia came with you and for the time you had with her -- but then you give thanks she died. Give thanks for all the time you have now available to you and that you don't have to concern yourself one iota with how you have to live. Give thanks you have the children to tell stories to. Give thanks you have a community that wants to hear

wisdom from you and will value your wisdom. Give thanks that you can gather with the community every Sunday and give thanks -- and that means you come, Luke. You asked for directions. I've given it. I'm kicking your butt now.

Yes, the same prescription goes for everyone else, too.

John's blog

7 July Year 1

This is my first blog posting since I opened the process three days ago and I am in awe of what is coming out. When I launched this, as Frieda (I do love her!) said, I thought it would generate occasional entries and then directed towards the home audience back on Earth. As I've noted, it will be another 4 1/2 years before these transmissions even reach Earth. Suddenly I sense that the Earth audience is no longer what it's all about. It's not just that the six of us are talking through our blog as we never exchange in person (perhaps we will now, at least better). It is that most of the colony is logging in to read what we are writing. I have just come from the morning tearoom and the sole topic of conversation was yesterday's blog! I had absolutely no idea the communication had caught on like this.

I canvassed the idea of opening up the blog to more people but no one wanted that. They wanted us to continue to be open and upfront with our feelings and ideas and comments -- to continue as we have begun.

Frieda's blog

7 July Year 1

To be honest, John, I'm a bit pissed off that the blog has suddenly become public entertainment. Our original intent was to communicate with the folks back home about life on a different planet in a different solar system. If the folks here find that interesting or entertaining that's fine by me but I will not play to the crowd.

Madam Lu's blog

8 July Year 1

Whatever the issues about 'local consumption, this blog is indeed directed towards Earth. I've commented already on the fact that our number here is too low to be able to sustain the colony long-term. We are coming to grips with issues we never properly considered before are leaving Earth. One critical issue is higher education.

The colony is like not like the Mayflower or any other colonial venture undertaken on planet Earth. There people could go out and make their way by sheer effort, by blood, sweat and toil, and education could be a very secondary factor beyond the three Rs. Further, those aspiring to university level education or the development of special expertise could leave the colony, train and return. Then, in recent generations, we've had the added advantage of distance learning so that someone living in the back-of-beyond could do a degree from Cambridge University or a host of other universities and institutions.

Here, though, we are up against a massive problem. This colony requires a very high level of scientific and technical expertise just to survive. Think of the nuclear power plant has only one example. If trained nuclear technicians do not maintain it, it will break down and we'll all be dead.

We have nearly 100 children and youth in our community with more being conceived and born regularly. There is no doubt that we would grow naturally in time as in normal colonies. Archaeologists tell us that the entire Maori population of New Zealand may have come from a few dozen original migrants, possibly without any further reinforcement of numbers. But they did not require higher education to survive. We do. And that is something we cannot adequately provide, not to the degree of the need required. What are we to do? We cannot send our youth back to Earth for training. Think of the logistics -- 7 1/2 years each way plus a minimum 5 to 10 years to doctorate level -- 25 years turn-around! Distance learning? How about sending off an exam paper for marking and waiting nine years for the results.

I am totally convinced that this colony can survive only if there is a regular transfusion of highly trained and qualified people arriving here. What I fear most now is that back on Earth the "window" others have spoken of is closed and there can be no more voyages like ours. If that is the case, then we are as doomed as earth.

I am arranging for the Council to forward something official along these lines.

Timothy's blog

8July Year 1

I don't challenge Mme Lu's assessment in the last blog though it conflicts directly with my plea for no more colonists. On a practical level, we confront these two seemingly irreconcilable positions -- dammed if we do and dammed if we don't. In the end, the result will probably be what humanity always seems to do -- we muddle through and everyone says, we should have done better.

I want to offer a totally different perspective. I think that Frieda may be spiritually on the right track when she describes her vision of humanity spreading through the universe. I can't say I'm so sure, yet I am deeply sure that this venture of ours does have that dimension of cosmic significance. Now it may well be just as Frieda describes -- that in sending life outside Earth we have taken a cosmic step in itself. I guess the issue, starkly expressed, is this: it is my deep sense that life and the universe is not a product simply of accidental change but an intent of which the entire advent and development of humanity is a key part. That intent embraces the entire universe to be outermost star (if there is such a thing), and life and consciousness are somehow a centrally significant element in that intent.

My fundamental stance towards the entire exercise is that we are engaged in an enterprise that has divine intent behind it -- in what way I do not know nor need to know. If we have, in some such way as Frieda describes, already fulfilled our part in that intent and we vanish into the dust of this planet, I am content. If our purpose lies in the other pole of Frieda's vision, to the furthest star, then we will be resourced from that and what is fundamentally called from us is a trust in that resourcing, which will come and come in unexpected, unanticipated and unimagined forms.

I affirm this even into the face of the possibility that Earth may not be able to supply us in any way, people or materials, and we are on our own, with all the confrontation with our limits that Mme Lu identifies, yet we will find we possess and receive all the resources we need or ever will need to meet our vocation -- that is what it is. We were born -- all of us -- to do this, be this. We will not fail.

I am not denigrating the issues raised by Mme Lu. They are real and must be confronted - - just as the effect of new arrivals will, if it happens, challenge our newly emerging culture in the way I described earlier. We must confront and deal with these issues. However, the words of Paul in the first letter to the Corinthians -- faith, hope and love in your -- these three -- are as relevant for us on Alpha Centauri as ever on earth. It is if we lose any one of that trinity that we are truly doomed.

John's blog

8 July Year 1

This blog is going to get me into big trouble but I don't care. I feel as if I have lived for this moment.

An hour ago -- and this is the first word to anyone other than my colleagues here -- I pulled the most stupendous results off the computer.

First, the life organisms we released only 25 days ago are multiplying at an exponential rate beyond any expectation . My computer calculated that, if this expansion continues at this rate, life organisms, microscopic, will blanket the entire planet, land and sea--- in 10 years! What took billions of years on earth is happening here in a decade. It is already way beyond any possibility of control.

The other stupendous results, allied of course to the first, is that our instruments have detected oxygen in the atmosphere -- minute, but there!

Imagine if we were able to transport back several billion years on earth and observe the very beginning of organic life. That is my feeling at this moment.

Frieda's blog***8 July Year 1***

I just read John's views in a break preparing a transmission to earth. I can't say anything in the transmission because not even the Council knows this news yet, at least not officially -- and yes, John, you're going to get into the shit because your blog will reach Earth ahead of anything official.

But heck! I am blown off the surface of the planet! You wait till I get you in bed tonight, John! Do you know what I want right now? That we make a new life -- a baby -- to celebrate this incredible new life on the planet. There. I've said it -- and said it for everyone on the planet and on earth to hear.

Fantastic!

Timothy's blog***8 July Year 1***

I echo Frieda's excitement (not other thought, though!). Yet, John, I tremble. What have we done?

Oh, and John -- I've just spoken with VJ. His turban nearly spun off his head with excitement. Don't worry -- you are forgiven. Thanks for sharing the news so quickly.

I'm suggesting we don't blog at all for the next 24 hours or we'll smother everyone with gibberish.