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Author: Murdo Macdonald

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Patrick Geddes and the Tradition of Scottish Generalism

Murdo Macdonald[1]

Patrick Geddes was a pioneering ecologist, an influential botanist, a highly-original theorist of cities, an advocate of the importance of the arts to everyday life, a committed community activist, a publisher, a founder of town planning, and – of course – an educator. He was born at Ballater on 2 October 1854 and spent most of his childhood and youth in Perth. For the major part of his career the Outlook Tower in Edinburgh was the point of reference for his international activities, first in Europe and later in India and Palestine. He died at the Scots College he had founded at Montpellier in the South of France on 17 April 1932. He had a life of extraordinary vitality, variety and interest. He was appointed in 1888 as the first Professor of Botany at University College, Dundee. Thirty years later he became the first Professor of Civics and Sociology at the University of Bombay, a university that he himself had helped to found. As a student he studied evolution with T. H. Huxley in London, where he came into direct contact with Darwin. Later in that city he was one of the founders of the Sociological Society. Back in Edinburgh, in the 1880s he supported the conservation and development of Old Town communities through his founding of the Edinburgh Social Union, and in the 1890s, shifting to an educational role, he commissioned and subsequently worked from the iconic Arts and Crafts condominium of Ramsay Garden in which we find ourselves. There he was a moving force behind the Celtic Revival in Scotland. In his magazine, *The Evergreen*, Geddes advocated not just a Celtic Revival but a Scottish renascence, an idea that Hugh MacDiarmid adopted to great effect.

Geddes' commitment to national revival was profoundly international in outlook. As a student, both from a scientific and a cultural perspective he was drawn to France where he studied biology in Paris and Brittany, and

[1] A version of this paper was given as The Royal Town Planning Institute in Scotland's 'Sir Patrick Geddes Commemorative Lecture' at the Royal Society of Edinburgh in May 2009. It was subsequently published in *Scottish Affairs*. A revised version was presented at a seminar organised by Cairns Craig, exploring Geddes' significance, at Ramsay Garden, Edinburgh, in November 2010. The paper has been revised further for this publication.

absorbed the sociology of Comte and the anarchist politics of the geographer Elisée Reclus. This all in the spirit of the Auld Alliance which had, as Geddes was well aware, remained an active political and cultural force from the time of Joan of Arc to the Jacobite wars. An example of this interest in the Auld Alliance can be seen in an image of Joan of Arc and her Scots Guard, drawn for *The Evergreen* by John Duncan. Philip Boardman wrote of Geddes that he was an ardent Scot, and 'that he was an equally loyal and intellectual son of France' , but also that 'he placed himself no less convincingly in a third category, of world citizenship, without abandoning either France or Scotland.' This internationalism carried over into his approach to education, for example at the Outlook Tower and Ramsay Garden in the 1890s he pioneered some of the first international summer schools.

My opportunity here is to deepen our understanding of Geddes' diverse achievements by exploring his thinking from the perspective of the Scottish intellectual culture of which he was part. This deeper analysis of the wellsprings of his thought illuminates his relevance, not only with respect to the history of Scottish thinking in general, but also with respect to the cultural benefits for us in the Scotland of the twenty-first century of understanding the powerful intellectual context from which Geddes' thinking sprang. Thus I emphasise not just Geddes' historical importance but the relevance of his vision for us here and now. For example: the current state of the global economy is a reminder that it is not wise to define the needs of the planet as though money were more important than the realities of the lives to which that money is meant to relate. Almost a century ago Patrick Geddes put it this way: 'Some people have strange ideas that they live by money. They think energy is generated by the circulation of coins'. That statement comes from Geddes' final lecture to his students at University College Dundee in 1918, and the wider passage contains not just comment on global finance but a profound statement about planetary ecology. What Geddes says is this:

> 'How many people think twice about a leaf? Yet the leaf is the chief product and phenomenon of Life: this is a green world, with animals comparatively few and small, and all dependent upon the leaves. By leaves we live. Some people have strange ideas that they live by money. They think energy is generated by the circulation of coins. But the world is mainly a vast leaf-colony, growing on and forming a leafy soil,

> not a mere mineral mass: and we live not by the jingling of our coins, but by the fullness of our harvests.'[2]

What more apposite comment could there be with respect to the wider sustainable development of the planet? In the end it is vegetation, not money, which is the issue. In that same lecture Geddes reflects on the interdependence of arts and sciences and how each should inform the other. It is this interdisciplinary approach to thinking that I wish to consider here, for this is the Scottish educational tradition of which Geddes was part. For Geddes, the economist required the complementary insight of the ecologist and such opportunities for mutual illumination applied across all the arts and the sciences.

This generalist view gives insight into Geddes's approach to planning. For Geddes, planning risks losing touch with the communities, cities and regions that it sets out to serve, if it does not take a multiplicity of approaches into account. Listen to this summary of his philosophy of planning, which he submitted as part of a 1915 report. It was written at the behest of Lord Pentland, not in Scotland but in India: 'Town-planning is not mere place-planning, nor even work-planning. If it is to be successful it must be folk-planning.' What Geddes meant by this was that what was needed was a full appreciation of the cultural, historical and geographical antecedents of a community, and furthermore the capacity to enable that community to be fully aware of those antecedents. That is why his cultural revival was at the heart of his Edinburgh planning effort. It was not an add-on extra, it was a condition of successful development.

Geddes continues:

> This means that [the task of town-planning] is not to coerce people into new places against their associations, wishes and interest – as we find bad schemes trying to do. Instead its task is to find the right places for each sort of people; places where they will really flourish. To give people in fact the same care that we give when transplanting flowers, instead of harsh evictions and arbitrary instructions to 'move on', delivered in the manner of officious amateur policemen.[3]

The architectural historian Norma Evenson wrote of Geddes that 'his common sense approach was … difficult to fault. He approached his

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[2] A. Defries, *The Interpreter–Geddes: the Man and his Gospel* (London, 1927). This book includes the full text of Geddes' lecture,172–190.

[3] P. Geddes, *Report on the Towns in the Madras Presidency, 1915, Madura* (1915), 91. Quoted in J. Tyrwhitt (ed.), *Patrick Geddes in India* (London, 1947), 22.

investigations with receptivity to the local scene, seeking to understand the nature of the Indian settlement, and making no attempt to impose a foreign conception of urban environment'.[4] This exemplary approach can be seen in two contrasting images from one of his Indian reports. These show Geddes' plan for the development of an area of an Indian town versus the municipal plan. The municipal plan is based on imposing an alien grid of streets, no doubt related to some utopian master-plan, convenience of troop deployment, or perhaps just to lack of time or imagination.[5] By contrast, Geddes' plan is sensitive to the local building pattern, and it is centred on the planting of a tree in the centre of a human-scale, community-oriented space. Geddes knew how much difference a single tree could make. Back in Edinburgh every unoccupied site was an opportunity for him to develop a garden.

But, again, what concerns me here is not so much what Geddes did, but the background to what he did and how that background helps us to understand him, and, indeed, ourselves. While Geddes' influence as a pioneer of town planning has received considerable attention over the years, the Scottish generalism that drove it, has not. My aim here is, therefore, to complement other perspectives on Geddes by giving emphasis to the distinctive Scottish intellectual tradition of which he was part.

When Giancarlo De Carlo – one of the most distinguished of all twentieth century Italian architects – visited Edinburgh in 1994 he said: 'Here in Scotland, in Scottish culture, from what I have read and I have studied, I think you have one educational pillar which is very important. It is what you call generalism … [and] … you have a good grounding in this approach, not least because of the work of Patrick Geddes … '[6]

So what is this generalism? Geddes put it this way:

> [a] general and educational point of view must be brought to bear on every specialism. The teacher's outlook should include all viewpoints … Hence we must cease to think merely in terms of separated departments and faculties and must relate these in the living mind; in the social mind as well – indeed, this above all. [7]

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[4] N. Evenson, *The Indian Metropolis* (New Haven & London, 1988), 114–15. See also M. Fry, *The Scottish Empire* (East Linton, , 2001), 229–30.

[5] J. Tyrwhitt, *Geddes in India*; 53–6. Excerpted from the 'Madura' material in Geddes, *Report on the Towns in the Madras Presidency*, 82.

[6] Interview with the Italian architect Giancarlo De Carlo by Peter Wilson, *Newsletter No. 1 of the Edinburgh City of Architecture Bid* (Edinburgh, 1994).

[7] Final lecture by Geddes to his Dundee students in Defries, *The Interpreter: Geddes*,

My own awareness of this generalist current of thought stems from the teaching of the philosopher and historian of ideas George Davie, at the University of Edinburgh. Davie was the author of that classic account of Scottish thinking, *The Democratic Intellect* (1961), a text that brings into relationship, among much else, the scientific achievement of the Scottish Enlightenment and the poetry of Robert Burns. So when I first encountered the work of Patrick Geddes, I saw his effortless bridging of the perceived gap between arts and sciences in relation to the wider intellectual tradition that George Davie describes. Davie's account of the generalist educational legacy of the Scottish Enlightenment and its antecedents provides the essential context within which to appreciate the wide-ranging thinking we associate with Geddes. Indeed Davie himself notes Geddes' teaching as representative of this Scottish approach.[8] It is important to stress this for it is all too easy to see Geddes' breadth of interest as a kind of unique indicator of genius. What I argue is that it was in fact part of a developed tradition, which we would do well to learn from today.

Traces of this generalism remain in Scotland, for example the four-year undergraduate degree, which enables a wider spread of subjects to be studied than in the three-year system south of the Border. The rationale is, of course, that one area of thought or expertise benefits from illumination by another and it is therefore culturally and educationally desirable to be able place such areas in relation to one another. By extension, any aspect of knowledge, culture or society benefits from illumination by other aspects. For both George Davie and Patrick Geddes the task of the educator was to facilitate such processes.[9]

Hugh MacDiarmid, a generation younger than Patrick Geddes and a generation older than George Davie, and a friend of both men, wrote of Geddes in *The Company I've Kept* in these terms:

> his constant effort was to help people to think for themselves, and to think round the whole circle, not in scraps and bits. He knew that watertight compartments are useful only to a sinking ship, and traversed all the boundaries of separate subjects.[10]

172–90.

[8] G.E. Davie, *The Democratic Intellect* (Edinburgh, 1961), 24.

[9] For further consideration see M. Macdonald (ed.), *Edinburgh Review*, No. 90 (1993), 'Democracy and Curriculum Issue', and M. Macdonald, 'The significance of the Scottish generalist tradition', in J. Crowther, I. Martin, and M. Shaw (eds), *Popular Education and Social Movements in Scotland Today* (Leicester, 1999).

[10] H. MacDiarmid, *The Company I've Kept* (London, 1966), 83.

As Philip Boardman put it, Geddes 'held constantly before both teachers and students the single goal of reuniting the separate studies of art, of literature, and of science into a related cultural whole which should serve as an example to the universities still mainly engaged in breaking knowledge up into particles unconnected with each other or with life'.[11]

While I emphasize the rootedness of Geddes' thinking in a Scottish tradition, I also to stress its international context. As Geddes' great American disciple Lewis Mumford said '[Geddes'] Scotland embraced Europe and his Europe embraced the world'. Quite so. No one has better visualized that sentiment of Scotland embracing Europe and Europe embracing the world, than Patrick Geddes' son, Arthur. Arthur Geddes drew a remarkable bird's eye view of Scotland in its geographical context in the 1940s, as part of his survey of the Western Isles. It reverses the perspective of the ever-tedious BBC weather map. Scotland, Europe and Africa fall into place within the curvature of the planet in an image that reflects the thinking both of Patrick Geddes and of his friend the French anarchist geographer Elisée Reclus. The advantages of the general view in conjunction with the carefully chosen viewpoint become immediately apparent. Not only that, but one can see immediately the intimate psychological relationship between thinking generally and thinking visually, and such visual thinking is also, of course, a key characteristic of Geddes' work.

While Scotland may have insisted on fostering generalism at a time when other nations were headed down a more specialising route, there is, of course, nothing exclusively Scottish about a generalist tradition of thinking. For example, from a central European perspective one of the great early modern generalists was the seventeenth century Moravian educator, Jan Amos Comenius, a thinker praised by Geddes in his book *Cities in Evolution*. Comenius put the rationale for generalism like this: 'He deprives himself of light, of hand and regulation, who pushes away from him any shred of the knowable'.[12] Geddes was never one to push away from himself any shred of the knowable, and he may well have read that very quotation for it appears in a work by his older Edinburgh contemporary David Masson, Professor of English Literature and Rhetoric at the University of Edinburgh.

Comenius shares something else with Geddes. He was an advocate of visual methods, indeed in his book, *Orbis Pictus* he developed for the modern era the

[11] P. Boardman, *The Worlds of Patrick Geddes* (London, 1978), 129.

[12] Quoted by David Masson, in his monumental *Life of Milton* (London, 1873), 1859–94; 213–14.

notion of visual experience as integral to verbal explanation. In that work, according to another of Geddes' older Scottish colleagues, the pioneering educationist Simon Somerville Laurie, 'Comenius applies his principles more fully than in any other'.[13] I have noted the link between the visual and the general, and one of my aims here is to draw attention to the linkage in Geddes' thinking, as in that of Comenius, between the ability to take a broad view of knowledge on the one hand and the ability to think visually on the other. It is important to note that such linkage is also crucial to understanding other generalist thinkers, whether we think of a fifteenth century artist like Leonardo Da Vinci or a twentieth century geneticist like C. H. Waddington.[14] It is not hard to see why this psychological linkage should exist, for there is a holism in a visual approach that is not evident in more linear methods of notation. There was, in Geddes' Scotland, a cultural and intellectual understanding of this.

For example, in *The Democratic Intellect* George Davie makes explicit the link between generalism and visual thinking in his discussion of the tradition of Scottish mathematics, nor least with respect to the achievements of Colin Maclaurin and Robert Simson. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, through Simson's annotated editions of Euclid, this tradition had emphasized a metaphysically-informed, geometrical approach and one can note that Geddes referred to geometry as 'the greatest educational influence of all'.[15] Further indication of the significance of this commitment to the visual and its concomitant generalism can be inferred from the fact that Geddes wrote the entry on 'morphology' for the ninth edition of that generalist, Edinburgh publishing project the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, while James Clerk Maxwell had written the entry on 'diagrams' a few years earlier.[16] Geddes' friend and colleague at University College Dundee, the biologist D'Arcy Thompson, also contributed to the ninth edition and in due course wrote that classic of visual thinking about biology, *On Growth and Form*. This work followed a few years

[13] S.S. Laurie, *John Amos Comenius* (London, 1881), 191.

[14] See for example, C.H.Waddington, *The Strategy of the Genes* (London, 1957), *Behind Appearance* (Edinburgh, 1969), and *Tools for Thought* (London, 1977).

[15] Boardman, *Worlds of Patrick Geddes*; 20. Boardman also notes that in Perth Geddes was taught that other most visual of disciplines, geology, by James Geikie (1839–1915) who, along with his elder brother Archibald, was among the most influential geologists of his day. He was author of a number of books including the standard work on the glacial period. In addition he was a translator of the poetry of Heinrich Heine: truly a generalist and visual thinker to inspire Patrick Geddes.

[16] Maxwell was, until his death in 1879, also science editor of that edition.

after Geddes' own classic of visual thinking applied to the social, cultural and urban field, *Cities in Evolution*.[17]

An understanding of Geddes must, therefore, take note of this Scottish generalist tradition for its visual as well as its interdisciplinary aspects. What flows from this is an appreciation of Geddes' Scottish intellectual context as psychologically central to his wider achievement, not least as a planner.

Geddes' Outlook Tower in Edinburgh can be taken as a case study of such generalist visual thinking.

The way Geddes developed the Outlook Tower can be thought of as a kind of three-dimensional response to Comenius' *Orbis Pictus* in so far as it is 'not only a … treatment of things in general, but of things that appeal to the senses'.[18] But whether it owed a direct debt to Comenius or not, the organization of the Outlook Tower was a physical expression of Geddes' philosophy. The Outlook Tower was both at the heart of the social spaces of Geddes' halls of residence and central to the wider historical and geographical context of the city and the region.[19] Something of its significance is reflected in the fact that in 1922 Lewis Mumford described the Outlook Tower as the point of origin of the Regional Survey Movement,[20] and as early as 1899 Charles Zueblin of Chicago University felt confident in describing it as the world's first sociological laboratory.[21]

In 1896 Geddes had emphasised the visual thinking inherent to the arrangement of the Tower, in these words: 'While current education is mainly addressed to the ear (whether directly in saying and hearing, or indirectly in reading and writing), the appeal of this literal "Outlook Tower," or Interpreter's

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[17] The two works were published in 1917 and 1915 respectively. A further indication of the interest of Patrick Geddes' work from a visual-thinking perspective can be found in Volker Welter's illumination of his place within the utopian–spiritual strand of European modernist architectural thinking in his *Biopolis: Patrick Geddes and the City of Life* (Cambridge, Mass., 2002).

[18] Laurie, *Comenius*, 191.

[19] It was in 1892 that Geddes first began to experiment with this tower, but not until 1896 did it become fully defined as a centre for investigating the relationships of city, region and planet, from every perspective. For the earlier history of the Outlook Tower see V. Wallace, 'Maria Obscura', *Edinburgh Review*, No. 88 (1992), 101–10.

[20] L. Mumford, *The Story of Utopias* (New York, 1922).

[21] C. Zueblin, 'The world's first sociological laboratory', *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. iv, no. 5 (1899), 577–91. Heinz Maus, comments in his *A Short History of Sociology* that 'one may say that it is with Geddes that the town first moves into the purview of sociology, which, astonishing as it may seem, had up to then dealt with it only casually and occasionally' (1962; 47).

House, is primarily to the eye…'[22] The visitor to the Outlook Tower would be taken by Geddes to the top and would then see the city itself in two ways: an enclosed, painterly and magical view from within the camera obscura and a direct view, weather and all, from the terrace. With these already contrasting perceptual experiences of the city firmly in mind, the theoretical exploration, cultural and ecological, could begin floor-by-floor below, in rooms devoted to Edinburgh, Scotland, English-speaking nations, Europe and the world. The Outlook Tower thus enabled the visitor to unite the local, the regional, the national and the international as if they were a series of waves spreading from, and returning to, a central point. The starting point was the direct perception of a real city not an idea of it, and this perception was the basis for any further exploration. Geddes' conception of the Outlook Tower was thus radically local – that is to say down to the level of individual perception – but that local quality became the context for the understanding of the regional, the national and the global.

The way Geddes used this tower, as a college, as a museum and as a laboratory is one of the most developed examples of his thinking. But we must remember that complementing the Outlook Tower is Geddes' Arts and Crafts condominium[23] of Ramsay Garden. This complex was another pioneering expression of generalist educational aims. By 1893 the old house of the poet Allan Ramsay had been transformed into Ramsay Lodge, a student residence capable of accommodating some forty students. This was the heart of the varied buildings which Geddes developed at the head of the Old Town to serve as 'accommodation of graduates, extra-mural teachers, and others more or less connected with the University'.[24] Ramsay Garden is both traditional in ethos and modernist in implication.[25] And at its core is, of course, that symbol and real expression of environmental sustainability, a tree.

The teaching method that Geddes helped to pioneer in this complex of buildings was a further expression of his generalism. This was his annual international summer meeting, and for Geddes a crucial aspect of the summer meetings was the interplay of different areas of knowledge. For example the

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[22] P. Geddes, et al., (eds), *The Evergreen Almanac* (Edinburgh, 1896).

[23] I owe this particular description to Kitty Michaelson.

[24] *University Hall, Edinburgh* (Edinburgh, 1900), 10.

[25] Cf. 'Geddes was emphatically not a conservationist, but a passionate moderniser. As his own interventions in the Edinburgh Old Town showed, he would happily demolish or alter old buildings at will if they stood in the way of his wider cultural vision of the future'. M. Glendinning, and D. Page, *Clone City: Crisis and Renewal in Contemporary Scottish Architecture* (Edinburgh, 1999), 35.

prospectus for August 1896 advertises Geddes himself teaching courses on 'Contemporary Social Evolution' and 'Scotland: Historical and Actual'. Others teaching included the artist Helen Hay, giving a course on 'Celtic Ornament and Design', and the geographer Elisée Reclus lecturing on 'The evolution of rivers and river civilizations'. Music was in the charge of Marjory Kennedy-Fraser, at that time beginning her experiments with Gaelic song.[26] The inherent internationalism of the meeting is implied by the fact that Reclus' course was advertised and – in part at least – delivered in French.

In a weekly column that Geddes, or a close colleague, wrote to accompany these summer meeting studies, an intriguing glimpse is given of the interdisciplinary links being fostered. The writer addresses Helen Hay, asking her if she can find in her Celtic ornament 'means for the pictorial representation and symbolism of current ideas'.[27] This generalist challenge to explore art and ideas must be seen in the context of Hay's ongoing work for Geddes' magazine, *The Evergreen*. *The Book of Summer*, the third part of *The Evergreen*, had just been published and it begins with an almanac for the summer months by Helen Hay. These almanacs are conjunctions of art and ecological thinking, indeed they give *The Evergreen* a visual identity to complement its overall description as 'a northern seasonal'. In Geddes' mind also would have been Hay's Celtic knotwork borders for a mural scheme in the student common room of Ramsay Lodge. These can be seen in old photographs, but sadly they are now mostly destroyed. Geddes' enthusiasm for their formal beauty, and their diagrammatic and symbolic potential is clear: he wrote that 'each device is a separate living thought'.[28]

But while on the one hand Geddes was interested in how the interlace borders of these murals had the potential to convey ideas, on the other hand he used the content of the main mural panels, carried out by the artist John Duncan, to explore the history of Scottish ideas. So one can see him interested here in art as a generalist method of thinking in terms of the possibilities both of its form and its content. The content of those murals begins with Celtic myth, *The Awakening of Cuchullin*, a symbol of the Celtic cultural revival to which Geddes was committed. I hardly need to stress that there was nothing inward looking about this, for Geddes' re-evaluation of

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[26] M. Kennedy-Fraser, *A Life of Song*; *A Life of Song* (London, 1929), 120.

[27] *The Interpreter*, August 1896, 3; Geddes Papers, Strathclyde University Archive, SUA T GED 5/3/33.

[28] *The Interpreter*, April, 1896; Geddes Papers, Strathclyde University Archive, SUA T GED 5/3/33.

Celtic material was part of an international network of cultural revivals, which included India and Japan as well as much of Europe.[29] Indeed, in 2009 I spoke about Geddes and the Celtic Revival at the National Gallery in Helsinki, in the context of a major exhibition devoted to the Finnish national epic, *Kalevala*.

The Awakening of Cuchullin is the anchor image of the series and leads on to *The Combat of Fionn*, which shows a scene derived from Macpherson's *Ossian*.[30] The third panel moves us from Gaelic Celticism of *Ossian*, to the Brythonic Celticism of King Arthur in *The Taking of Excalibur*. This is set, typically for Geddes, in the local context of Duddingston Loch beneath Arthur Seat. The next panel continues that southern Scottish Brythonic theme with the image of *The Journey of St Mungo*, at the same time introducing quasi-historical Christianity into this visual exploration of Scottish legends and ideas. Following it is an image inspired by the writings of the great Gaelic-speaking theologian of the ninth century, *The Vision of John Scotus Erigina*. This dream is complemented in the next panel by the thinking of the mage and early scientist from Fife, *Michael Scott*, renowned for his translations of Aristotle. Note that these latter two figures show a significant transition in the series for they indicate the beginning, in the medieval period, of an intellectual tradition clearly continuous with the present. The final figure of the first set was *The Admirable Crichton*. Crichton was the sixteenth century Scottish and European Renaissance scholar *par excellence*, and his inclusion strikes a personal note for Geddes, for he was thought to have had his early education at Geddes's old school, the Grammar School of Perth. And through figures such as John Napier, the inventor of logarithms, and James Watt, who is compared with Prometheus, Geddes, via John Duncan's art, brings his students back to their present. So these murals had a direct educational function with respect to the intellectual history of Scotland. They exemplify Geddes' emphasis on cultural sustainability as the complement to environmental sustainability. And they are one more aspect of Geddes' wider view of Ramsay Garden and the Outlook Tower as a site of thinking guided in the first instance by the eye and then by a generalist philosophy of education.

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[29] In due course Geddes was to have close links with those concerned with Indian cultural revival, in particular Sister Nivedita, Ananda Coomaraswamy and Rabindranath Tagore.

[30] J. Arthur Thomson's description of the murals can be found in *The Interpreter*, April 1896; Geddes Papers, Strathclyde University Archives; SUA T GED 5/3/33.

Geddes underlined this visual generalism further when he described the Outlook Tower as a 'graphic encyclopaedia'. In a letter written in 1905 he explains this in the following terms:

> the Tower may be best explained as simply the latest development of our Edinburgh tradition of Encylopaedias, and hence arising in turn in the very same street where are all the others, *Britannica*, *Chambers*, and minor ones. It is in fact the *Encylopaedia Graphica*. The *Encyclopaedia Graphica* for each science and art in turn and in order … [31]

Of particular interest within this context of a graphic encylopaedia is the use of stained glass windows by Geddes for his generalist teaching purposes. In one of these windows in the Outlook Tower, the *Arbor Saeculorum*, or tree of the generations, what Geddes sees as the temporal and spiritual contexts of the Western tradition are presented in a historicist manner from ancient Egypt to the late nineteenth century. The basic point is that while the *Arbor Saeculorum* reflects on the content of cultural history, its complement, the *Lapis Philosophorum* encodes the essential relationship of the arts and sciences considered as methods of thought.[32] Geddes' concern here is with public communication of the central generalist point that what we call arts and sciences are deeply intertwined with one another.

The final window from the Outlook Tower that I consider here is *The Typical Region*, better known as *The Valley Section*, Geddes' tool for regional survey. Evident in this stained-glass image are Geddes' categories of folk, work and place: the quarry and the mine in the hill, the sheep and the forest on the hill, arable and cattle farming and crofting on the low ground, and the city with its industry, its trade and its shipping. But on another level this stained glass version of the *Valley Section* is a multiple representation of what the physical and social world is at the moment and could be in the future. Looking at the Latin wording which appears below this window – 'Microcosmos Naturae. Sedes Hominum. Theatrum Historiae. Eutopia Futuris' – one sees Geddes

[31] National Library of Scotland, Ms. 10511 f100. Geddes to Dr. Paton, 7 Feb. 1905, writing from 6 Christchurch Road, Hampstead. See also M.C. Boyer, *The City of Collective Memory* (1994), 221–3 for comment on Geddes's inspiration in Diderot and d'Alembert's approach to visual material.

[32] The Lapis image, this 'philosopher's stone' is described in a guide to the Outlook Tower published in 1906 as an image of 'an obelisk whereon is outlined in graphic notation a classification of the Arts and the Sciences'. Geddes, *A First Visit to the Outlook Tower*, 23.

insisting on a set of at first sight contrasting and yet mutually illuminating views of the valley. The valley is first and foremost ecology: a 'microcosm of nature', but it is also the 'sedes hominum', the seat of humanity, the place where human beings make their lives as part of that ecology. And linked to this it is the dramatic 'theatrum historiae', the theatre of history, the past experience that should inform the future. Finally, it is the 'eutopia' or 'good place' of the future, a place that Geddes believed could be achieved through local and international co-operation, and adoption of sustainable technologies.

Geddes' holistic cultural and ecological vision was thus given impetus and focus by the development of the Outlook Tower. Charles Zueblin's characterization of the Tower as the world's first sociological laboratory has been noted, but it can be emphasised here that Zueblin considered that the tower merited this description because it was 'at once school, museum, atelier, and observatory'.[33] So for the participants at Geddes' summer meetings the Outlook Tower was not just the venue, it was the symbol and context of the thinking, within the wider social context of University Hall and of Edinburgh itself.

Geddes knew the value of specialisation: he was a biologist by training and he helped to bring into being the disciplines of sociology, geography, ecology and planning. But he understood that disciplines depend for their origin on interdisciplinary thinking. They emerge from the interaction of earlier formulations of study. They come from the spaces in between. The irony is that as they develop into disciplines, their interdisciplinary origins are often no longer seen as relevant and the significance of their relationship to other disciplines may no longer be perceived. Indeed, it will be in the interests, both financial and professional, of the practitioners of any new discipline to demarcate it clearly from other disciplines. Thus the geographer Brian Robson refers to Geddes' 'diluted legacy' in planning, geography and sociology and comments that too often it was 'the bare bones, not the spirit' of Geddes' work that was taken up.[34] That lost spirit was, in large part, his generalism – his interdisciplinarity – and it is this that I think we must revisit in all our thinking about Geddes.

We must, therefore, be inspired for the future by Geddes as a generalist thinker in a generalist tradition. If we value his planning vision we must value

[33] C. Zueblin, 'The world's first sociological laboratory', *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. iv, no. 5 (1899), 577–91.

[34] B. T. Robson, 'Geography and Social Science: The Role of Patrick Geddes' in D. R. Stoddart (ed.), *Geography, Ideology and Social Concern* (Oxford, 1981), 187–207.

where it comes from, and it comes from his intellectual and cultural generalism. In turn that generalism is rooted in the intellectual tradition of which he was part, in which one area of knowledge is honoured with respect to the way it relates to others and informs the whole. George Davie identified this as 'democratic intellectualism' and Geddes is one of its greatest exponents. At the same time, we who advocate the interests of Scotland should take pride, not just in Geddes, but in this tradition of thinking.

Two industrialised wars fostered specialisation in the twentieth century and the second world war was a watershed for how Geddes was considered. Despite the best efforts of Lewis Mumford, after that war Geddes' generalism began to be seen as an eccentric quality, not of importance in its own right. Yet just as Geddes' generalism was fading from public consciousness, south of the Border, C. P. Snow was feeling the need to invent his 'two cultures' debate as though there had been no previous thinking about the relationships between arts and sciences. But by this time Geddes' relevance to the debate was little noted and his reputation was seen primarily in terms of his role as a pioneering planner. Indeed had it not been for planners keeping Geddes' generalist reputation alive during a period of specialisation, there is a risk he would have been forgotten entirely.

It is important to explore Geddes' life and career in such a way as to advocate his generalism rather than to regard it as an inconvenient distraction from a specialised career. It is crucial to remember that this generalism is founded on a developed Scottish tradition of major cultural value, which deserves to be properly valued again.

As we stumble across the globe from financial to ecological crisis and back again, the value of Geddes' generalist view could hardly be clearer, whether considered from a national or international perspective. Geddes' generalism did not simply allow him to look for sustainable solutions, whether cultural or ecological, it actually impelled him to look for those solutions and to see them as linked. More widely, for Geddes, any sustainable place could only continue to be so if it took both its heritage and its ecology seriously. And for Geddes, appropriate action in the present, in the interests of the future, depended on an in-depth, generalist understanding of what had happened in the past. That was the essence of his thinking whether applied to ecology, cultural revival or planning, the crucial point being, of course, that–like George Davie–he saw all these activities as illuminating one another. Geddes himself put it this way:

> Breadth of thought and a general direction are not opposed to specialised thought and detailed work. The clear thinker realises that they are complementary and mutually indispensible.[35]

In stressing the significance of the Scottish intellectual tradition of which Patrick Geddes was part I have drawn attention to the continuing relevance of that tradition of generalist thinking. In addition I have drawn attention to the significance of the tradition of visual thinking that accompanies it. By taking heed of these aspects of our intellectual heritage in Scotland we may look in a more informed way at the cultural, educational and environmental issues that face us. For Geddes such understanding started with the local and embraced the international.

University of Dundee

[35] Tyrwhitt, *Patrick Geddes in India*; 66.