

The Weekly WoKer

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1 Welcome to the Weekly WoKer

Welcome to the weekly WoKer, the first weekly newspaper for WoK Forums. Inside you will find:

- A brief editorial piece offering my personal view of what has happened in a given week
- Letters to the Editor
- An overview of the week's activities, including descriptions of any exciting events that might have taken place outside of the usual schedule
- Brief summaries of each specific WoK activity, including lists of participants
- Interviews with WoK participants about their experiences with WoK Forums

- Announcement of the upcoming week's schedule, including the Sunday talk speaker and abstract, Monday reading group reading, and any deviations from the normal schedule

2 Letter From the Editor

It has been an exciting week in WoK forums! The highly successful abbreviated schedule has led to greater participation, we have seen the arrival of this paper, and the WoK wiki has gone live, so the atmosphere is electric with the possibility of producing some content of lasting import.

3 Letters to the Editor

Brief letters to the editor are more than welcome. Please submit all letters to abmcgowan@gmail.com

In order to be guaranteed consideration for inclusion in next week's edition, letters must be received no later than 8PM EST Thursday evening. Letters received after 8PM EST on Thursday may be included in the next week's edition if there is remaining space. If there is no remaining space these letters will be considered for publication in the following week's edition.

4 News

4.1 Repairman, Interior Designer Join Forces to Redecorate Ghastly Colloquium Room

An anonymous tipster has informed the WoKer that on Tuesday, December 4 WoK repairman Andrew McGowan and participant/Interior Designer Doug Carmichael joined forces to redecorate the until now relatively barren Colloquium room. The modifications were initiated at the suggestion of Forums mayor Piet Hut, who thought that the relatively undecorated space did not serve to adequately facilitate communication. ‘It was just kind of this big empty space,’ Hut remarked, ‘There was really nothing to break it up or make it interesting. There was just this big powerpoint on one wall, and basically nothing else.’

WoK repairman Andrew McGowan echoed Hut’s sentiments when talking about approaching the project, ‘it was really a big challenge to know what to do with the space. There didn’t seem to be any obvious way to break it up or make it more interesting that would fit with its purpose as a colloquium room. If it was a real colloquium room I could have just put in some real chairs, but since the avatars aren’t too flexible for the most part that didn’t make too much sense. I was really stymied. So I talked to Dr. Carmichael to see if he might have some ideas, since we worked together creating the lab space.’

4.2 WoKipedia Goes Live!

As of the night of Wednesday, December 5 WoKipedia, the WoK Wiki, has gone live, sources say.

A wiki is a software environment that allows for collaborative editing of documents. It keeps track of all of the versions of the documents that are produced, and of who makes which changes. Probably the most famous example of a Wiki is Wikipedia, the online encyclopedia, which you can find at: www.wikipedia.org

Now that we are beginning to generate a lot of content in WoK forums, we will be using a Wiki to begin to write more polished pieces, so that our investigations are not just ‘words spoken into the wind.’ Participants will have the opportunity to write essays or papers, either collaboratively or alone, which other users can then view and comment on. If we like, we can then select some articles to put on the WoK web-site, or even to publish elsewhere.

For more information, please see the e-mail you received from Andrew McGowan, the ‘Wiki Whatever’ (a title chosen to emphasize the collaborative, non-hierarchical spirit of the Wiki), and feel free to contact him at abmcgowan@gmail.com if you have any questions.

4.3 Bad Server Weather Puts Kibosh on Door Repairs, Proves Difficult to Scrub Off

Some bad server weather during the transfer from the old server to the new server destroyed a number of doors. WoK repairman Andrew McGowan initiated repairs

that were ultimately destroyed by further bad weather. When asked about the incident McGowan commented, ‘Yup. I reckon bad weather happens sometimes. But we just keep on fixin what it tears down. Life’s just like that sometimes.’

4.4 Local Artist Opens Gallery

WoK Forums artist Robert Magrisso, primarily a physician in the real world, has unveiled a gallery of his own original artwork in the forums. Leading WoK forums art and architecture critics have characterized the gallery as, ‘easily one of the most beautiful spaces ever created in WoK forums—a real gem.’ To visit the gallery go to Bob’s personal office, accessible from the log-in menu, the Archive, the forums box, or the places menu. If you visit the gallery please be mindful of where you place your pointers, since it is easy to accidentally move or resize pieces in the gallery. All children must be accompanied by a responsible adult.

4.5 Real Estate Market Fallout Leads to Plummeting, Virtually Free Office Prices

The recent fallout in the real estate market has led to plummeting, virtually free office prices, WoK Forums market analysts report. Participants are now able to obtain personal offices at no cost, simply by notifying the construction manager at abmcgowan@gmail.com.

It is not clear how long this situation will last, said an anonymous analyst, ‘Basically these are spaces that the participants can decorate in any way that they like, and that they can use to meet with other WoK Forums participants in private. The

offices are also a way for WoK forums participants to get to know each other, in addition to their bios in the Wiki. The three dimensional spaces offer a much broader array of ways for them to express who they are, and other participants can then go to the different offices to get a feel for who they might be talking with, since in some cases participants have not met each other in the “real” world. Given the enormous value of such an office, it is not likely that the prices will remain this low for long.’

Construction manager Andrew McGowan disagreed, saying simply, ‘as long as they want ’em, we’ll build ’em.’

4.6 Little White Shack Replaced By Replica of the Smithsonian Museum of Natural History

On December 9th, in a move virtually impossible in the real world, Qwaq Construction Manager Andrew McGowan replaced the WoK forums building in the Garden (formerly a nondescript white shack) with a scale replica of the Smithsonian Museum of Natural History. He is now beginning to work on expanding the landscaping of the garden. Please feel free to e-mail him at abmcgowan@gmail.com with any suggestions about the garden, or any other space. Volunteers to come in-world and discuss how to adorn the forums are also more than welcome. Vandals will be hanged.

4.7 Brownian Motion Conversation Experiment Launched

On December 12 WoK Forums citizens Doug Carmichael and Andrew McGowan launched the Brownian Motion Conversation, an experiment in spontaneous, nonlinear, asynchronous discussion in a written format designed to take advantage of the

unique features of the wiki. Please feel free to read it over, and to contribute if you like. You can either access the experiment from the main WoKipedia page:

<http://www.waysofknowing.net/wiki/>

As with the rest of the Wiki, anything you write as a part of the experiment is only accessible to other forums participants.

Please contact the WikiWhatever at abmcgowan@gmail.com if you have any questions or comments, or if you encounter any difficulties.

4.8 Piet Publishes Paper Preprint Partially Pertaining to His Experiences in Qwaq Forums

On December 11 WoK Forums Mayor Piet Hut published a preprint in the astrophysics archives about his experiences in virtual worlds. You can find the paper at the following url: <http://arxiv.org/abs/0712.1655>

More information on the response to this paper will be available next week.

5 Activity Summaries

5.1 Saturday, December 8, 5PM: Steven's Weekly Lecture

Steven Tainer was on retreat, so he was not present to give his weekly talk on the contemplative background of the content of the Working Hypothesis. Similar gaps will occur approximately once a month, but this Saturday, December 15th, Steven will give his talk as usual.

5.2 Sunday, December 9, 5PM: Weekly Guest Lecture

Bob Magrisso and Doug Carmichael hosted a conversation on the topic ‘Death and the Working Hypothesis.’ Steven Tainer and Andrew McGowan were also in attendance. Bob talked about mystical death and physical death, and Doug talked about the effects of the fear of dying, especially in a cultural context. The conversation then ranged over a wide array of interesting topics.

A more complete summary of this remarkable talk is available. Please contact the WoK archivist at abmcgowan@gmail.com if you would like a copy.

5.3 Monday, December 10, 10PM: Weekly Reading Discussion

Andrew McGowan, Karen Sobel-Lojeski, Put Hut, and Steven Tainer were present. Karen, Piet, and Steven discussed the importance of transition periods, specifically the bardo in Tibetan traditions. Piet also said that while we (as participants in modern culture) have gained the ability to switch frameworks rapidly, we lack the kind of groundedness that previous cultures would have taken for granted. He said that we may be able to use our ability to switch to our advantage.

5.4 Tuesday, December 11, 10PM: Response to the Sunday Lecture

Andrew McGowan, Doug Carmichael, and Piet Hut were present. Piet had to leave shortly after the beginning, so Andrew and Doug talked about the new building, the

new calendar, the newspaper, improving activity on the wiki, and Benjamin Franklin.

5.5 Wednesday, December 12, 5PM: Working Hypothesis Discussion

Doug, Jan, and Piet were present, and continued a delightful discussion that had developed on the woklab listserv about the Working Hypothesis and our use of language. In particular, they discussed how discussions in WoK Forums can take on the character of jazz jam sessions.

6 Ask a WoKer

Beginning next week we will be including brief interview with WoK participants. If you are interested in being interviewed please contact the editor at abmcgowan@gmail.com

7 Upcoming Events

7.1 Saturday, December 15, 5PM EST

Steven Tainer will continue his weekly presentations on the contemplative background of the content of the Working Hypothesis in the Colloquium room.

7.2 Sunday, December 16, 5PM EST

Wikifest! WikiWhatever Andrew McGowan will be giving a talk about WoKipedia, the WoK Wiki. It will be a two part talk, with the first part giving some background about the wiki and how we might use it, and the second part using Qwaq's built in browser to give demonstrations of various features of the Wiki. For more information, including a summary of the talk, please see the notice sent to the wokforums listserv by Steven Tainer.

7.3 Monday, December 17th, 10PM EST

The weekly reading group convenes. There is currently no reading selected for this week, so Steven Tainer will be present to discuss any aspect of WoK with all comers.

7.4 Tuesday, December 18th, 10PM EST

The series of discussions about the Working Hypothesis continues in the garden.

7.5 Wednesday, December 19th, 5PM EST

The series of discussions about the Working Hypothesis continues in the garden.

7.6 Thursday, December 20th, 10PM EST

WikiWhatever Andrew McGowan will be present for a followup discussion to the talk he is giving Sunday, December 16th. He will be taking all questions about how to use the Wiki. No autographs.

8 Announcements

8.1 Monthly Readings

Doug Carmichael has launched the book-of the month program. Here are the selections for December and January; please feel free to e-mail suggestions for future readings to me (abmcgowan@gmail.com) or Doug (doug@dougcar michael.com).

8.1.1 December

The book of the month for December is *Momo*, by Michael Ende. Why are we reading Momo? In the words of an Amazon reviewer:

‘This book is awestriking, deeply philosophical, and it’s more important for grown-ups to read it than children. It’s a social commentary about how our negative perception of time is destroying our society, robbing us of our happiness, and skewing our values of what is really important in life. The heroine has to fight back with a positive perception of time in order to repair the damage done. Some parts of the book are very frightening, and this is because that the same time they’re very much imaginary, they are also real at the same time... at the same time as being something you never have and never will encounter, they are things that you have encountered many times and know it, just like everybody else in the world; you’d have to read the book to see what I’m getting at there. No, it’s not even a magic thing.’

For more information, including ordering information (the book is out of print), please see the original announcement sent out to the wokforums listserv by Doug Carmichael.

8.1.2 January

The book of the month for January is *Cosmopolis*, by Steven Toulmin. In the words of Doug Carmichael:

‘I’ve just been re reading Steven Toulmin’s book *Cosmopolis* in which she says that the received opinion that the enlightenment occurred at a time of increasing wealth and civility in Europe is just plain wrong. It was the period of the 30 years war, the assassination of Henry the fourth in France, who was a great mediator between the Catholics and protestants, bad weather, lots of unemployment, and terrible tensions in the whole of Europe as the nation states solidified into new structure is taking power away from the pope. The reaction of Descartes and Leibniz was to help create a project that could be seen as a minimal project without reference to culture, religion, the arts, history or anthropology but based instead on what was absolutely certain and beyond doubt.

‘Toulmin says that the earlier project of Shakespeare, Rabelais, Erasmus and in particular Montaigne, was rich in culture, local color, and detailed interests in the lives of real people: how they lived, how they thought, their actual concerns.

‘Toulmin says that this enlightenment project was a response to a crisis and basically stripped out the human from the philosophical and scientific discussion. We could have had the scientific developments of the Enlightenment built in parallel with the humanistic enlightenment of the previous generation rather than being an opportunity to ostracize those achievements with a new language at once mechanical and cartesian.

‘The book is helpful in providing the background to my own thinking which has

to do with the re humanization of science in terms of the reach of its subject matter, the way it integrates the living concerns of the scientists, and the way it appeals to the public. I believe that science and the enlightenment are part of a new culture of thoughtful experimentation, tolerance, and a healthy minded approach to living. In its current form science is too much concerned with the world we inherited from god and the watchmaker and not enough concerned with that of the rest of what is human: the world of love and poetry, war and war's alarms, the dramas of daily life, and the lessons of history and anthropology and primate studies.'

9 Quote of the Week

I wonder why I wonder why. I wonder why I wonder. I wonder why I wonder why I wonder why I wonder!

– Richard Feynman