AFF Missions SCIO (SC051360)

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AFF MISSIONS SCIO STATEMENT

By Claude Inkumsah

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Summary

The western society is not monolithic therefore, people's commitment to their daily worldly duties is influenced by an "us against them" ethos. Unfortunately, with the rise of algorithmic curation, this ethos has become a powerful lobbying apparatus in politics and a lucrative commodity of the free market. By appropriating this ethos to fuel political and ideological contestations, an intense state of affective polarisation is triggered. Studies show that affective polarisation is exacerbating poor mental health such as anxiety, depression, obesity, and substance abuse in the western society because it provokes repressive otherization and incites bullying, violent extremism, discrimination and marginalisation.

Secondly, there is rise in the commodification of moral degeneracy. In recent times, people's expressions of their otherness on digital entertainment platforms have become lucrative; thus, creating competition among content creators and driving them to unimaginable depths of moral degeneracy to come up with more deplorable antics for views and viral moments. The result is the proliferation of contents that promote dangerous antisocial behaviours, misogyny and misandry ideologies, debauchery, bullying, hate speech, extreme violence, cults, and gang culture. These contents are not only impressing degeneracy and the rejection of tradesmanship and higher labour skill development upon the vulnerable minds of our younger generation but causing a spike in poor mental health such as anxiety, depression, self-harm and substance abuse.

We have discovered that society is sustaining a very detrimental psychosocial impact as the repercussions of these problems. Through our study in social anthropology and psychology conducted on various pockets of spirituality and faith communities we observed that cultivating **agency of interconnectedness** in a community, potently remedies psychosocial impacts of this magnitude. Simplistically we can say, by "cultivating agency of interconnectedness" we mean inspiring people to uphold civic agentive attitudes that propagate civic values such as **equality, diversity, charitability, serviceability, accountability, and responsibility**. This agency of interconnectedness operates in self-transcendence and maintains a charisma that exudes altruism, activism, pacifism, empathy, modesty and sanctity. Therefore, to achieve this mission, we amalgamate social science research and creative arts to program the schemas, charisma and virtues of the agency of interconnectedness into events and activities of **expressive arts, seminars, innovative pedagogy, and multimedia presentations** for communities such as schools, universities, faith groups and corporations. Our events, however, are branded as the **AoIn Events,** which involves **AoIn Festival**, **AoIn Clubs**, **AoIn Campaigns**, **AoIn Literature, AoIn Pod** and **AoIn Socials**.

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INTRODUCTION

We are a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation (SC051360), and our mission is to promote the ultimate wellbeing of society by inspiring civic values of equality, diversity, charitability, serviceability, responsibility, and accountability through the cultivation of agency of interconnectedness.

In this manifesto, we present the problem, propose the necessary solution to the problem, and show how we plan to implement this solution to achieve the ultimate wellbeing of society.

PROBLEM

Our focus is on affective polarisation and commodification of degeneracy as the two problems that deeply undermine the ultimate wellbeing of the western society. Studies show that affective polarisation has saturated the social fabric of the western world, and according to Frazer et al (2022) polarisation is not only detrimental to the socio-political wellbeing of society, but it has a direct link to mental and physical health of people. It is exacerbating depression, anxiety, obesity, self-harm and substance abuse in people because it incites repressive otherization i.e., violations of the "other" through bullying, discrimination, and violent extremism.

The western society is not monolithic so the failure of policy makers, politicians, voices of activism, and various stake holders to nurture the benignity of the "us against them" ethos allows it to be appropriated in fuelling contestations that provoke the conviction in people that the ultimate wellbeing of society is perverted when choices, beliefs, opinions, lifestyles, and practices of others do not align with theirs. With this conviction, people assume the ***pious*** role and declare those who do not align with their position as the ***infidels*** whose perversions are the causes of disorderliness and deterioration of the wellbeing of the milieu. This ***pious-us against the infidels-them*** positioning cultivates utter detestation, anger, and hostile aggression in people, and that cultivates repressive otherization;[1] thus, escalating the violation of otherness[2] through marginalisation, bullying, discrimination, and violent extremism.

Social politically, this misappropriated ethos is the drive behind contestations between the reactionary and the progressive ideologies of the western society. The former pushes nationalism and fundamentalism agendas against the individualism and "liberating tolerance" (Marcuse, 1965) agenda of the latter. Both agendas create lack of community integration and cause disconnect between people; hence, fostering the tendency of minimizing the necessary mutual engagement that allows people to be more aware and empathic towards each other's experience. As this disconnect i.e., **fragmentation**, is tribalized and politicized, the divergences escalate to levels that stoke animosity between people and that's when **affective polarisation** is yielded.

Unfortunately, the attempt to remedy this problem has failed. We live in an era where people believe that openness about their otherness and the liberty to function as such is necessary for their holistic health and wellbeing, hence the rise in involvement of causes that promote equality and diversity to secure such freedoms and liberties. Notwithstanding, our society's hermeneutics on the concept of equality and

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[1] Projecting otherness into an apparatus of repression towards those with different positioning than yours, the other
[2] Otherness is not synonymous with the repressed, the minority, the outlawed or the pariah. It simply refers to the characterisation of a person or a group of people as different and exclusionary with respect to another's way of being.

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diversity is disappointingly skewed. We perceive equality with a vision of sameness instead of wholeness, so we recklessly ignite the us against them ethos in our promotion of such expressions of liberties and freedoms. Therefore, the propagation of equality, diversity, and inclusivity by activists and policy makers rather incite repressive otherization; thus, provoking affective polarisation and harming the ultimate wellbeing of society. Sadly, the advent of artificial intelligence in the world of free market has also enabled grifters, lobbyist, politicians and various ideological proponents to curate algorithms of search engines and social media platforms (Noble, 2018) to incite repressive otherization and provoke affective polarisation.

The second problem is the commodification of moral degeneration and its damaging effects on the mental health of people. We live in a milieu where wellbeing is at the forefront of the organismic welfare of society but the ambivalences surrounding wellbeing themes such as "self-love" and "self-care" inspire self-centeredness, self-absorption, and self-worship. This makes our approach to wellbeing very susceptible to traits of narcissism such as self-idolatry, excessive self-enhancement, over prioritization of extrinsic goals, conspicuous consumption and financial abuse.

As stated earlier, there is the belief that the liberty to express our otherness is necessary for the ultimate wellbeing of society. However, in an environment of free market where the pursuit of extrinsic goals is considered as the ultimate, this liberty of expression is being commodified on digital media entertainment platforms to generate lucrative revenue through subscriptions, clicks and views. Over the years, society's insatiable consumption of such contents has turned creatives into high earning talents and celebrities; thus, causing influx of creatives and talents in this niche.

The outcome is a fierce competition in which creatives are pushed into unimaginable depths of degeneracy to come up with contents full of deplorable antics for viral moments. This has also caused proliferation of digital media platforms (especially streaming sites) with very compromised terms of service that accommodate these depraved contents that promote dangerous antisocial behaviours, misogyny and misandry ideologies, debauchery, bullying, hate speech, extreme violence, cults, and gang culture. The problem is that demographically, 69% of the world's population have access to more than one of these digital media platforms that promotes these contents, and the younger generation (those between the ages of 16 and 34) account for the largest number of users.

That is unsettling because these are the impressionable years where "susceptibility to attitudes" is very high (Krosnick & Alwin, 1989, pp. 416-25). This implies that the future of society is being cultivated with perversions that will bring utter ruins to its ultimate wellbeing. They are being empowered to express their otherness with the spirit of degeneracy. Secondly, the lucrative commodification of these behaviours as contents on digital media platforms has corrupted the younger generation to perceive the pursuit of tradesmanship and high-skilled labour as less ambitious and waste of time and money. They claim, if you really want to "get your money up," then working "nine to five is bum status, you can't get to the bag" with that. In their philosophy of wellbeing, they overprioritize the pursuit of extrinsic goals i.e., physical fitness, fame (especially, having huge followers on social media) and earning lots of money to afford extravagant lifestyle. Therefore, no matter how deplorable and degenerate the approach to earning money can be, if the individual can acquire loads of it to splurge on the nicest things in life, they must be accorded great deal of respect and the status of excellence in life.

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We must alter this perception and attitude of the younger generation whiles we can, else the future of our society will be left in the hands of an unskilled, extravagant, self-absorbed and entitled people whose degeneracy and perversions will cause society to spiral into deviance, dysfunction and utter disorderliness. In other words, the ultimate wellbeing of society will be in utter ruins in the nearest foreseeable future if we do not confront this issue. Policy makers and many charitable organisations have been working diligently to establish enticing apprenticeship programs and scholarship programs for high-skilled training but as long as the psychosocial impact is being overlooked as the crux of the problem, all these programs will not move the needle.

SOLUTION

The ultimate impact of both problems on society is psychosocial. Moreover, various projects and programs that seek to confront these problems are either faith based, politically influenced, or ideologically programmed so they fail to offer the needed interconnectedness for the necessary holistic impact. Therefore, our objective is to design programs that cultivate this interconnectedness within the organismic character of society with no political or ideological attachments.

Spirituality is deemed as a natural "primordial" human practice (James, 1985, p. 30) that focuses on "efforts" and "perfection" of humanness (Heehs, 2014, p. 252). Therefore, in the social sciences, it is approached as a reliable natural arrangement bearing values, beliefs, ideologies, rituals, and practices that can be interpreted and conceptualised into programs and theories to solve the psychosocial problems of society. This therefore set the precedence for us to investigate spirituality communities for an answer to the psychosocial problem at hand. In our study on spirituality communities and their impact on health and wellbeing of society, we discovered that exemplars function as agencies who foster interconnectedness in their communities. In their pursuit of "supreme good" (Shields, 2015) exemplars apprehend the inspiration to practice interconnectedness (Reed & Haugan, 2021) as the natural and virtuous way of being, and necessary for healing communities from polarisation and moral degeneracy.

The Conceptualisation

Spirituality paths conceptualise this supreme good as blessedness or in the terms of Aristotle, "eudaimonia"[3] (Cohoe, 2020). They understand this blessedness as a concept of wellbeing that must be pursued with a cosmological vision of liberation, reconciliation, and wholeness. In the Augustinian idea of beatitude, this blessedness is twofold[4] (Cohoe, 2020) where one leads towards "moral excellence" (Broadie, 1999) and the other towards "perfect happiness." As exemplars of spirituality pursue beatitude, they apprehend self-transcendence and become agencies of interconnectedness (hereafter referred to as **AoIn;** an acronymised form of agency of interconnectedness pronounced as ***ah-uin***).

Agency Of Interconnectedness

According to Maslow (1971) a person at the state of self-transcendence, pursues life altruistically by looking beyond self to care for the ultimate wellbeing of others and the environment. They cultivate an agency that pursues moral excellence by catering to the health and appearance of the physical body in a

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[3] The Aristotelian concept of eudaimonia or *beatitudo*, as used by Aquinas et al in Latin, refers to supreme happiness, blessedness, wellbeing, excellences, or human flourishing.

[4] The blessedness attainable in one's lifetime reflects what Aristotle refers to as "moral excellence" (Broadie, 1999), and the latter which is the afterlife reward is what Aquinas in Summa Theologiae, refers to as "perfect happiness".

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moderate ascetic culture; indulging in searching, acquiring, and applying knowledge in their daily life to foster **wholeness** and **liberation** of humanity; and interacting proactively in their community as a vessel of charitability to ensure wellbeing and flourishment of humanity and the environment. In this experience the person apprehends self-awareness, a "human consciousness" at "the highest (…) holistic levels" (p. 269). By liberation of humanity, they pursue,

    a. Redemption from repressions on health and wellbeing, civil liberties, socio-cultural freedom, political freedom, and economic freedom.

    b. Disentanglement of self from passions of vice and depravity, and indulgence of evil concupiscence.

    c. And the disenchantment from the charms of political, religious or ideological zealotry.

By wholeness, they perceive the universe as a natural whole within which the communion of life and matter is essential for its wellbeing. Communion means an ultimate concordance among one another that yields ultimate interconnectedness of lives to manifest ultimate wellbeing for all humanity. Therefore, in wholeness, exemplars of spirituality understand life to be a holistic experience of interconnectedness that unfolds as an interplay between people to yield the ultimate wellbeing of society. The exemplar becomes the AoIn exuding charisma full of altruism, pacificism, activism, communion, modesty and sanctity; thus, yielding oneness, virtuousness, peacefulness, thankfulness, helpfulness, blessedness, forgiveness and resourcefulness to encounter their daily worldly duties as agency of equality, diversity, charitability, serviceability, responsibility, and accountability. As the agency of these civic values, the AoIn becomes a very necessary player in the advancement of ultimate wellbeing of society.

In summary, the AoIn heals society by inspiring humanity towards pursuit of beatitude and sanctity, awakening of social consciousness and conscience, empowering of will, maturing of emotional intelligence, and stimulating of intellect. The AoIn perceives their ultimate purpose in society as the agency that fosters interconnectedness among people to confront affective polarisation and inspire scruples that convict people to object self-indulgent attitudes, over prioritisation of extrinsic goals, the commodification of illicit indulgences, financial abuse, and conspicuous consumption.

PLAN

The AoIn therefore, is the most potent remedy for the ultimate wellbeing of society so our plan is to cultivate it in people. In this plan we amalgamate various disciplines in social sciences such as (social anthropology, psychology, education, and religious studies) with creative arts to,

1. To interpret the charisma and virtues of the AoIn into schemas.
2. To program the schemas into activities covering,
   - Expressive Arts e.g., painting, music, drama, poetry, dancing, and storytelling.
   - Seminars e.g., lectures, speeches, presentations, and group discussions.
   - Innovative Pedagogy (Dialectical Learning) for schools, which involves analysing, criticizing, and synthesizing information i.e., maintaining an investigative, interactive, and expressive pedagogy.
   - Multimedia Presentation e.g. podcast, blogs, reels, music videos, short movies and RP games.
3. To launch these activities in schools, universities, faith groups, and corporations through the following **AoIn Events**:

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- **AoIn Clubs**- these are peer to peer fellowships and intervention groups in schools and universities aimed at empowering and inspiring the charisma, values and virtues of the AoIn.
- **AoIn Festival**- a joyful annual gathering of all diversities of people to creatively and expressively celebrate wholeness, liberation, and reconciliation.
- **AoIn Campaign**-seminars and expressive arts performances for schools, colleges, universities, and faith communities that inspire the values, charisma and virtues of the AoIn.
- **AoIn Curriculum**- amalgamating dialectical learning and expressive arts to design a curriculum that cultivates civic values of equality, diversity, charitability, serviceability, responsibility, and accountability.
- A**oIn Project**-our backend interdisciplinary research.
- **AoIn Pod**-our podcast streamed on Spotify and various other platforms.
- **AoIn Literature**- these are articles, essays, newsletters, books, and transcriptions of our audio and video presentations.
- **AoIn Socials-** these include YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok.

Funding

We are at a disadvantage in securing grants, sponsorships and partnerships because our work exposes the non-altruistic and grifting agendas of lobbyists and various voices of activism in the sociopolitical milieu of the western society. However, we are optimistic that there is a remnant of organisations, companies, groups and individuals such as you, who believe in the altruistic spirit and are willing to support us. Unfortunately, the lack of sponsorship has pressured us to solicit views, follows, likes, and subscriptions on our social media platforms because that converts to funds. We are on YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, TikTok and Spotify as AFF Missions SCIO and our blog's link is www.affmissions.co.uk/blog. To donate, please go to https://www.affmissions.co.uk/donate or contact us via admin@affmission.com.

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      Chair

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