

On the way to new labyrinths and enigmas or to more science and wisdom?

Address by Professor Arnljot Strømme Svendsen, London 12th September 2012.

Outline

1. Nothing endures but change, said the Greek Heraclitus 2500 years ago.
2. Reality reflects ideas, postulated Platon 2300 years ago.
3. According to Heraclitus and Platon reality as viewed by human beings is materialised ideas, and always changing. This means that reality in shipping is constantly in motion; it develops and changes just as do scientific hypotheses.
4. Man tries to influence human behaviour by laws, taxes, religious orders etc., and thereby often creates dismal labyrinths.
5. In spite of progress in science, insight into the human brain is limited and is a constant enigma.
6. The human brain stands behind epoch-fostering innovations and mutations in society. These may completely change economic life and realities. Homo Faber is the mysterious man, who is the crux of the problem. He poses challenges also for maritime economics.
7. Economics is a science of human behaviour. It also offers advice on economic policy.

In 1932 John Maynard Keynes wrote that in the long run mankind is solving its economic problem¹. But not so the many other challenges to our civilisation. They are more or less eternal; “how to live wisely, agreeably and well”.

8. What can we do as responsible individuals? Probably everybody has sufficient knowledge, but we lack kindness and wisdom. Here Sisyphus, the legendary Greek with the rolling stone, may be a role model. His wisdom was; never give up, but try and try again.
Then CIVITAS HUMANA may arise.
Once again reality (CIVITAS HUMANA) hopefully will reflect a splendid idea, as Platon postulated.
9. Aristoteles Onassis was a cosmopolitan Homo Faber and his prizes from 2009 are a perpetuum mobile for new bright ideas and intellectual mutations that hopefully will benefit the global economy and a wiser life for everybody.

¹ Keynes (1931) «Economic Possibilities for Our Grandchildren (1930)” in John Maynard Keynes “Essays on Persuasion”, London, MacMillan, 1931