

Poetic and Philosophical Reflections on Economic Development

Donald T. Iannone

WISDOM WORK PRESS

Cleveland, Ohio

At Wisdom Work Press, we define wisdom as the conscious integration of knowledge, experience, reflective understanding, and a measured tolerance for life's uncertainties and its continuous changes. Personal wisdom is most important, which requires self-knowledge, discipline, and self-leadership. These qualities ensure that we walk the wisdom path through life. Our publications and services help others to discover and mount their wisdom path in life.

Website: <https://wisdomworkpress.wordpress.com/>

Poetic and Philosophical Reflections on Economic Development

Copyright © 2016 Donald T. Iannone

All rights reserved.

ISBN-13: 978-1534676510

ISBN-10: 1534676511

DEDICATION

Poetic and Philosophical Reflections on Economic Development is dedicated to the men and women working as economic developers across America and the rest of the world. Your work is important to society, and your success in creating greater broad-based prosperity in the future can be accelerated by a deeper dive into the philosophical issues encountered in practicing economic development. Philosophy matters, and poetry is a powerful vehicle for communicating philosophical ideas, as this small book hopefully shows us.

Don Iannone
Cleveland, Ohio
August 26, 2016

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Dedication	iv
Table of Contents	1
Foreword	3
Sailing the Economic Development Seas for 40 Years	4
Less Structure and More Flow in Economic Development	5
Invisible Hand and the Soul of Economic Development	6
\$1.00 Tacos	7
Immediate Openings: Full-Time Positions on All Shifts!	8
Now Auditioning the Class of 2016	9
An Editorial on the Proposed Outdoor Bowling Alley in Downtown Zappa Wazoo	10
Payday Lenders	11
Fairness in Economic Development	12
The Millwright Poet	13
Flowering Business Start-Ups	15
Good Jobs	16
The Smiling Man in the Employment Line	17
Wall Street and Main Street Economic Development	18
As the Great Recession Begins	19
Small is Beautiful	20
Brexit, the Morning After	21
The Many Hats of the Economic Developer	22
Urban Rebirth	23
Uptown Martins Ferry	24
The Fairy Tale about Things Getting Better	25
New-Age, Old-Age Parks	26
Economic Development and the Middle Way	27
When a Factory's Life Ends	28
5 Things Everyone Should Know About Economic Developers	29
Philosophy Matters in Economic Development	30
Elmira	31
Pittsburgh	32
Tulare County	33
Economic Development Incentives	34
Categorical Realities in Economic Development	35
Tucson	36
On Knowing the Future	37
The Rise of the Spiritual Economy	38
Sizing Right-Livelihood into Our Lives	39

Poetic and Philosophical Reflections on Economic Development

Shining Forth in Our Work	40
On Economic Development Reality	41
Managing	42
Producing What Matters	43
Building Economic Labyrinths	44
Leadership	45
Sacred Cows and Sacrificial Lambs	46
Small Towns Down on Their Luck	47
The Karmic Wheel	48
Cleveland Looking Back and Ahead	49
When Singularity Reaches Economic Development	50
A Good Economic Developer	51
Economic Development Color Wheels	52
The South Wheeling Sylvania Electric Plant Closing in 1967	53
Ashtabula City	54
Ashtabula County	55
What's Next After Forty Years in Economic Development?	56
About the Author	57

FOREWORD

“The job to be done in philosophy is really more a job on oneself. On one’s own viewpoint. On how one sees things. ~Ludwig Wittgenstein

This is a self-help book. I wrote it to clarify my personal philosophy of economic development. I used poetry to explore these philosophical issues because poetry is deeply personal. What is personal is most sacred. What is most sacred is buried deep in our hearts. In poetry, there is no avoiding what lies in our hearts. Likewise, philosophy is intensely personal. If you don’t believe me, look at the hardcore philosophical issues being debated with great emotion by Americans in this year’s presidential race.

Economic development is the painstaking work of growing and sustaining good jobs, prosperity, and economic vitality in communities in a turbulent, conflicted, and uncertain world. It is not for the faint of heart. Competition for wealth and power in communities is brutal, and getting people to work together requires shared understanding, negotiation, compromise, and a deep-seated will and commitment to learn and grow together. That said, economic development is rewarding work.

While a great deal of good exists in the world, it is sometimes offset by greed, abuse of power, extremism, fear, prejudice, and selfish pride. We must rebalance the scales in favor of the good over these offsetting challenges, build a sense of common purpose, and help each other grow wiser, stronger, more caring, and resilient in the face of rampant change. We can achieve this if we work to understand ourselves and others, and build upon what connects us rather than what pulls us apart. This book provides insights on how to do this.

I share this small book with you, hoping you will join me on the journey of self-understanding to make the world a better place. That is why I work in economic development and why I write poetry.

Don Iannone
Cleveland, Ohio
August 26, 2016

\$1.00 Tacos

Driving to work this morning,
I noticed three bars within a mile of each another
sporting signs advertising \$1.00 tacos.

At first, I thought this was strange, but then I remembered
that was precisely what the free market is all about—
Giving consumers what they want, even \$1.00 tacos.

Upon reflection, I wondered why there was no price competition,
or at least some proclaimed differentiation of the product, but
maybe a taco isn't a taco isn't a taco.

Then I realized what was really going on—The soul of economic
development was at work: The tacos were merely an incentive,
enticing thirsty customers to stop in and buy drinks.

After all, bars make money selling drinks, not tacos.

Payday Lenders

Payday lenders outnumber Starbucks and McDonalds combined!
Now that is a growth industry, but not one
on most economic developers' business attraction lists.

What's the impetus for payday lenders' growth?
Large numbers of desperate people, trying to make ends meet,
even if that means paying 400% annual interest rates.

Payday lenders are everywhere—Rundown strip shopping centers,
the lowliest and seediest downtown streets, and even
outside the gates of the local military base.

Financially-challenged people are everywhere, and
some with poor credit scores are willing to risk
their car or house for a fist full of grimy dollar bills.

Payday lenders are reminders—that a growing number
of people live in economic desperation, and
at times the cure is worse than the disease itself.

The Millwright Poet

Millwrights install and repair machinery in factories—
That was Dad's job for many years, and
before he went to work each morning, he wrote poems on
lined and unlined paper, rumpled scraps of paper, and
occasionally on napkins and paper towels.
Dad was a millwright poet.

Dad knew good poems from bad ones because
he knew good poems hum like well-maintained machines.
If the poem didn't hum, Dad tinkered with it until it did.
One day I asked Dad for guidance on how to write good poems.
His advice? Always write poetry with a pencil and a large eraser
because revision is the secret to writing good poems.

Dad's advice pointed up his understanding of how all things,
including poetry and a millwright's work, are connected.
He also knew that life was never perfect, and
it is all about making the right changes until things hum, and
that hum is the universe telling us "We have done what we can do,
and now let's be satisfied with what we've accomplished."

Poetry was a spiritually centering aspect of Dad's life, and
while my poetry is different than my father's,
poetry plays the same centering role in my life.
Over time, I have come to discover poetry's power in carrying us
to magical places, including encounters with our very souls.

All this begs the question: Was my Dad a millwright
who wrote poetry, or was he a poet
who repaired factory machinery?
Similarly, am I an economic developer who writes poetry, or
I am a poet who works to strengthen local economies?
The answer is: Everything we do is a part of our life's work.

Flowering Business Start-Ups

It's a beautiful thing
to watch new businesses start-up,
like colorful tulips and roses,
taking root, and
sprouting in a late spring garden.

It's important to start with hardy seeds,
planted carefully in the right places, and
then watered,
given enough sun, and
kept free of strangling weeds.

Not all seeds birth flowers, and
not all business start-ups survive and grow
into thriving companies, which is why
we must plant the right seeds in the right places,
and ensure they have what they need to grow.

Good Jobs

A good job engages the body, mind and spirit.
It does so in a balanced way,
helping the worker and the world grow stronger
in an integrated way.

A good job adds benefit—
both material and nonmaterial in nature
to the worker and the world, helping
each to become better.

A good job produces more value
than it consumes, and
it is adaptable to change
to stay in tune with the times.

A good job is about meaning and purpose—
the deeper things we seek in life, and most of all
it must align with our personal calling—
that special reason we were put here in the first place.

Let's work at creating more good jobs.
In doing so, economic developers are fulfilling
their deepest calling—
breathing new economic life into communities.

The Smiling Man in the Employment Line

He impressed me—
the way he smiled,
as he stood with the other hungry faces,
with vacant downcast eyes, wearing
worn defeated shoes with no laces—
Shoes two sizes bigger than their feet.
His smile, a sunbeam,
spread across his broad whiskered face.
His determination gleamed through
his faded blue work shirt, all the way down
to his large muscular hands, that weren't afraid
of a sweat-stained shovel handle, or
to grip the sour-smelling rags, used to clean
the public toilets at the train station.
I counted them—133 men and 41 women, waiting
to be chosen for work, any job
that would pay them a dime, perhaps a quarter.
Enough for a loaf of day-old bread, maybe some beans.
If lucky, a can of oily sardines.
I was glad they picked him.
His smile would give hope to others,
encouraging them not to give up.
Each deserved a job,
some food for their families,
a pair of shoes that fits, and
most of all, a chance to smile again.

Note: This poem is based upon a story my father told me when I was a young boy. It is about the Great Depression years.

Urban Rebirth

Life seemed a far-off place in the city—
A forgotten land of gravestones, lost planets.
A barren dejected wasteland without memories.
Then one day, without provocation,
sunshine fell upon the land, and
clusters of boorish weeds began to grow in the field.

After a long period of bemused intercourse,
the weeds birthed a timid yellow wildflower,
whose sweet scent attracted the attention of a large bumblebee,
whose torn forewing caused the maimed creature
to fly off-course into the forgotten field of weeds.
It was love at first sight.

As more flowers began to grow,
a small cabbage butterfly spotted the field,
and after many abbreviated visits,
the field soon became its home.
Other bees and butterflies migrated to the field
in search of food and companionship.

The barren wasteland has surrendered—
Given itself over to life.
Greens have replaced the browns.
Flowers now outnumber the weeds.
Butterflies, bees, and other creatures live
in large numbers amidst the colorful flowers.
A new thriving metropolis now stands
where once only brownfields pined for love.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Don Iannone is an economic developer, poet, writer, teacher and photographer who lives in Cleveland, Ohio with his wife Mary and their three calico cats. Don has two grown sons, Jeffrey and Jason, and one grandson, Evan.

After nearly forty years in the local economic development field, Don has decided that poetry and philosophy have something to offer economic development, and he went to work on *Poetic and Philosophical Reflections on Economic Development*, his fourth book of poetry. It follows on the heels of *Chasing Cosmic Butterflies*, his third poetry book, which was published earlier in 2016. Don is also the author of five photography books.

Don's economic development career includes working for a regional planning and development organization, metropolitan chamber of commerce, two countywide economic development organizations, a state university, and since 2000 he has run his own economic development consulting company.

Don completed an undergraduate degree in Anthropology at Cleveland State University, graduate studies in Organizational Behavior at Case Western Reserve University, a professional diploma from the Economic Development Institute at the University of Oklahoma, and an M.A. degree in Consciousness Studies from the University of Philosophical Research in Los Angeles, where he currently teaches essay writing.

Don's website: <http://www.donaldiannone.com>

Wisdom Work Press: <https://wisdomworkpress.wordpress.com>