

# Applied Sociology Thematic Group

## Contact Email for March 2014

### *For the Australian Sociology Practitioner*

I have been preparing an article on the value of sociological studies and observations from the past, which I have not yet completed. However, there are some quotes that I think some of you, at least, might find of interest as comments on current situations. I have taken the Concise Oxford Dictionary's definition of Sociology: "the study of the development, structure, and functioning of human society" as a yard stick and looked for observations from the past that in some way meet these criteria and may resonate with people today. Confucius (c. 551 – 479 BC). Tells us to: "*Study the past if you would define the future.*" Another author, Thucydides (c. 460 – 395 BCE) tells us that "*My work is not a piece of writing designed to meet the needs of an immediate public, but is done to last for ever.*" Surprisingly he seems to have achieved it:

*"Some legislators only wish for vengeance against a particular enemy. Others only look out for themselves. They devote very little time on the consideration of any public issue. They think that no harm will come from their neglect. They act as if it is always the business of somebody else to look after this or that. When this selfish notion is entertained by all, the commonwealth slowly begins to decay."*

*"If it had not been for the pernicious power of envy, men would not so have exalted vengeance above innocence and profit above justice... in these acts of revenge on others, men take it upon themselves to begin the process of repealing those general laws of humanity which are there to give a hope of salvation to all who are in distress."*

*"When one is deprived of ones liberty, one is right in blaming not so much the man who puts the shackles on as the one who had the power to prevent him, but did not use it."*

*"War is a matter not so much of arms as of money."*

*"Most people, in fact, will not take the trouble in finding out the truth, but are much more inclined to accept the first story they hear."*

Others who have left their observations for us to ponder include:

Confucius (c. 551 – 479 BCE) suggests: "*What you do not want done to yourself, you do not do to others.*

Aristotle (c. 384 – 322 BCE) observes: "*To avoid criticism, say nothing, do nothing, be nothing.*"

And one much more modern one that might also ring a bell:

Friedrich Nietzsche (1844 – 1900) "*All truths that are kept silent become poisonous.*"

It seems that whilst the setting of humanity may change through the years, the behaviour of humanity changes little. So maybe what was learnt in the past may still be relevant in the present.

Alan Scott, Continuing Education Officer