

DISCOVERING AN INTEGRAL CIVIC CONSCIOUSNESS IN A GLOBAL AGE

Global Problems, Global Governance, and Denial

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ABSTRACT This article asks why, in an age of global crisis, global governance still remains a low priority for the integral community. It posits a civic line of development, suggesting only those possessing a worldcentric level of civic awareness can fully comprehend global problems and the need for binding global governance. I argue that modern (orange altitude), postmodern (green altitude), and even low vision-logic (teal altitude) worldviews still see global problems nationcentrically rather than worldcentrically. I explore this limitation in light of destructive international competition; a key and potentially catastrophic phenomenon that, it is argued, shows why only a worldcentric, late vision-logic (turquoise altitude) civic consciousness can disclose solutions to the global crisis. Ways in which green and teal altitude split off these realities are suggested, providing clues to how turquoise civic consciousness may be accessed and how the integral community may thus play a fuller, more effective role in global transformation.

KEY WORDS civics; globalization; government; holarchy

Civics entails the rights and duties of citizenship and the role citizens have in establishing, shaping, and overseeing government at any level (Altinay, 2010). Civics is founded on citizens' perception that governance is actually necessary; that it is functionally required to solve societal, environmental or economic problems at a particular level, be it local, national, or global.

If, for example, a citizen could not perceive national-scale problems, or mistook them as being of a merely local nature, she would see no need for national governance at all.¹ Her civic consciousness would be merely local or ethnocentric. Such a citizen would recognize only their local authority or tribe as functionally required and would likely see any higher levels of government as superfluous, wasteful and suspicious. Those at orange altitude or higher, on the other hand, recognize national government to be required in addition to local governance. Their depth of civic consciousness thus has two levels. Yet, in an age when our problems are increasingly global and threaten our civilized survival, it is notable that very few citizens see any need for a third level, that being *global* governance. Indeed, for the vast majority of people, including those up to teal altitude, civic consciousness remains, as I will be arguing, at best nationcentric. The emphasis on global civics indicates that global problems must first be *perceived* as such; a worldcentric perception that indicates that merely technical solutions or national (or local) politics cannot suffice. Instead, a vertical transformation toward a form of binding global governance is necessary.

I distinguish the civic from the political line of development in the Lower-Right (LR) quadrant by noting that civics is fundamentally about the *perception*, by citizens, of a need for governance. Politics, on the other hand, is what happens *after* governance (or formal government) has been established. Civics, in that sense, is prior to politics.

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The Civic Holarchy

Like all lines of development, the proposed civic line tetra-evolves and manifests in all four quadrants. Civic holons are most obvious in the LR quadrant, in what I will be referring to as “the civic holarchy.”² This is the holarchy of our institutions of governance that has evolved and bonded together human societies from the earliest hunter-gatherer bands, through to Middle-Age city and small-states, and up to present-day institutions of national and global governance (Wilber, 2000; Wright, 2001).

Across a wide variety of cultures, the civic holarchy typically comprises, in the LR, the following levels: Local Authority → State → Nation-state. That is, the smallest civic holon is generally a local authority of some kind; an authority that determines local taxes and regulations. In some countries, local authorities form the parts that make up the larger whole of a state; an intermediate level of government which is itself part of a larger nation-state. In other countries, local authorities directly form the parts of the nation-state. In either case, each is a whole/part and each subsequent level transcends and includes its predecessor.

I end the civic holarchy with nation-states because although there may be many supra-national institutions of governance, such as the European Union, the United Nations (UN), and others, these institutions remain, for reasons elucidated later, heavily influenced by nation-states and their differing national interests. It is thus nation-states that today remain the key class of actors on the world stage, the most senior level in the civic holarchy.

Democracy and civics are closely intertwined wherever individuals have a legally binding vote.³ Thus, in democratic countries, individual citizens can be said to represent the Upper-Right (UR) quadrant correlate of civic holons at each level. Meanwhile the civic *consciousness* of an individual citizen represents the Upper-Left (UL) quadrant correlate. Similarly, the civic culture of a society will manifest in the Lower-Left (LL) quadrant and will be reflected by its institutions of governance in the LR. This is not to suggest an absence of civic consciousness in non-democratic nations; only that it is not mediated by democracy.

Integral Civic Consciousness

The nation-state system and representative democracy first came to prominence with the Western Enlightenment (Wilber, 2000). But given the intervening centuries, one would think civic consciousness, especially among those claiming an integral level of awareness, would by now have evolved well beyond a rational, nationcentric level to a genuinely worldcentric level. For, as Ken Wilber (2000) concludes with respect to our current global ecological crisis,

Gaia’s main problem is not toxic waste dumps, ozone depletion, or biospheric pollution. These global problems can *only* be recognized and responded to from a global, worldcentric awareness, and thus Gaia’s main problem is that not enough human beings have developed and evolved from egocentric to sociocentric to worldcentric, there to realize—and act on—the ecological crisis. (p. 525)

But if the integral community had evolved to such a level, one would expect it to be engaged in various forms of worldcentric civic-political action; action, in other words, aimed at establishing a form of binding global governance that Wilber and others argue to be fundamental to our species’ survival (Wilber, 2000; McIntosh, 2007; Stewart, 2000). But this seems largely absent. Indeed, integral practitioners seem markedly reluctant to engage in global civic action. As political commentator Scott Payne (2010) asserts, “Certainly activism as teaching people about an integral perspective is vital to our political, cultural, and conscious evolution. ... And yet, I still feel like there is a certain reticence among self-identified integralists around getting into the nitty-gritty, day-to-day grind of the political process.”

What this anomaly suggests is that while consciousness among integral practitioners may indeed have evolved to a more worldcentric level along *many* lines of development, it remains critically under-evolved in the *civic* line. Indeed, as I will argue, civic consciousness, for those up to at least teal altitude, still remains, in subtle but critical ways, bounded within a nationcentric worldview. It is this phenomenon—this arrested feature of our consciousness—I will attempt to elucidate and address. In doing so, however, let us first trace the development of nationcentrism itself.

The Nationcentric Worldview

Rationality and modernity, and with them nation-states, emerged with the Enlightenment, so succeeding the prior mythic-membership worldview (Habermas, 1979; Wilber, 2000). The prior, mythic (amber altitude) worldview recognized only those sharing the same tribe or religious belief; an *ethnocentric* worldview broadly reflected (in the LR) by the horticultural techno-economic mode and, in the civic holarchy of the time, by the Middle-Age small-state or city-state. But with orange altitude rationality came a more encompassing worldview. As Jürgen Habermas (1979) points out, formal operational rationality established the postconventional stages of “civil liberties” or “legal freedom” for “all those bound by law.” It thus extended the civic circle to a much wider group than its mythic predecessor and this was reflected in the LR by the industrial techno-economic mode and, politically, by the nation-state (Wilber, 2000).

In Europe, from roughly the mid-17th century, the circle of mutual respect expressed in each nation-state encompassed all those sharing a particular nationality. Yet, despite this greatly expanded in-group there still remained, for each nation, an “out-group” consisting of all people beyond its borders. This sense of in-group versus out-group was reflected in the competitive, colonial era whereby the rational worldview, being predominantly at orange altitude, saw its own nation before (or above) all others (Gellner & Breuilly, 2009). Struggles for democracy and human rights, although released by rationality—a wave that was transnational in its potential and often in its articulation (e.g., Marx)—nevertheless remained essentially national struggles. That is, since these newly won rights had to be enshrined in law, and since the law is guaranteed only by each nation-state, these struggles could only be resolved within a national framework. For the vast majority of Western citizens in the modern era, then, the concept of the nation-state was *internalized* as the highest and most powerful expression of a common identity; the highest expression of *We* (Smith, 1993).

The Postmodern Era and the Emergent Low Vision-logic Leading Edge

But what changes did the late-rational (postmodern) worldview bring to this earlier, quite xenophobic form of nationcentrism? And what of substance has the emergent, low vision-logic (teal altitude) worldview added?

In the postmodern era the modern notion of “my country above all others” has given way to a more egalitarian, pluralistic view. In keeping with postmodernism’s pluralistic relativism, nation-states are seen more as equals (Archibugi, 2008). Political identity is beginning to shift, albeit only to some extent, from nationcentric toward a more worldcentric view (Appiah, 2008). And yet our mode of governance and, as I shall explain, our *civic* consciousness, remain decidedly nationcentric. What seems to have happened is that while many aspects in both the LL and LR have become globalized (i.e., worldcentric), this has not occurred to the same extent in the civic line of development. As Greg Wilpert (2004) points out,

We can see that the current manifestation of globalization does not represent a globalization along all possible dimensions or lines of human experience. Today, only some aspects of human development are globalized, while others are left out. Specifically, the economic and some elements of the cultural dimensions tend towards the global, while the moral and political [including civic] dimensions remain largely stuck at the national level.

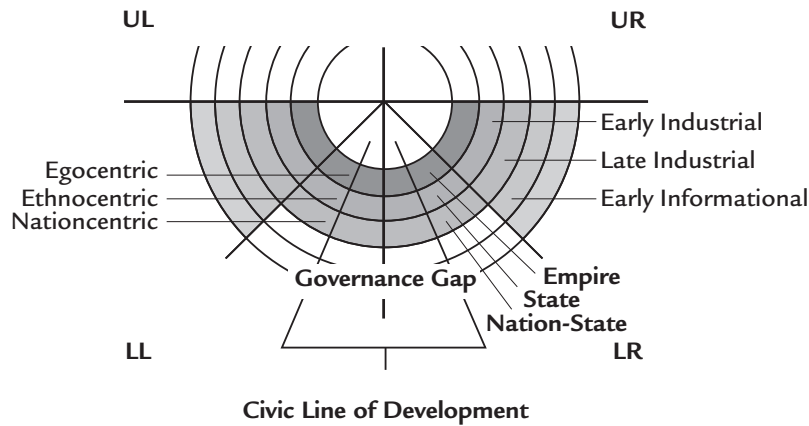


Figure 1. The “governance gap” depicting missing segments in the civic line of development. The innermost circle represents red altitude; proceeding outward, the circles represent amber, orange, green, and teal altitudes.

In the postmodern era, and among those at teal altitude, we can identify an increasing mismatch between, on the one side, aspirations (in the LL) and the economy (in the LR), both of which have moved to a *worldcentric* level, and on the other, civic consciousness (in the LL) and our continued confinement within national forms of governance (in the LR), both of which remain merely *nationcentric*. This mismatch, or “governance gap,” can be seen in Figure 1 by the missing green and teal altitude segments in the civic line of development in both the LL and LR quadrants.

But why do such mismatches or gaps arise? They occur, Wilber (2002) explains, because

technological innovation [in the LR] happens very fast, simply because you can change the *materials* of production fairly quickly But ... the worldview, the cultural accoutrements of religion, meaning, beliefs, shared values, and so on [in the LL] *moves much more slowly*, because this involves...an interior subjective transformation of consciousness—a notoriously slow and difficult process.

The problem, then, is that our techno-economic base (in the LR) is now *worldcentric*, as are many associated problems such as global warming, global financial market instability, and so on. But our *civic* consciousness (LL)—the very way we understand world problems and how to deal with them—still remains essentially *nationcentric*, as does our mode of governance (LR) (Bunzl, 2009b). That is, we still understand the world, not *aperspectivally* as a whole system, but substantially from within the prism of nation-states and their competing interests.

Efforts to Fill the Governance Gap

But the governance gap is not *entirely* empty. For, it is here we come to the plethora of global institutions and organizations mentioned earlier.

As noted, there are a number of institutions operating in the LR beyond the nation-state, most notably the United Nations (UN), World Bank, International Monetary Fund (IMF), and World Trade Organization (WTO). Equally, there are many nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), some operating on a global scale. These would include organizations such as Oxfam, World Wildlife Fund, Friends of the Earth, Greenpeace, and others. In what follows, it is not my intention to provide a comprehensive analysis of these organizations and their roles; only to give a brief overview of their position in the bigger picture I will be elucidating.

Governmental Approaches: The Global Institutions

Looking, firstly, at how nations act on the world stage and at the role of the global institutions—the UN, World Bank, IMF and WTO—we can see that their inability to deal adequately with global problems is rooted in two distinct yet related pathologies: one which concerns the global institutions themselves, the other which concerns nation-states.

Global institutions remain heavily influenced by nation-states, and particularly by the most powerful among them. Article 2:1 of the UN Charter, for example, determines that the UN itself can have no autonomous power over its member-nations (Whittaker, 1997). Moreover, the only powers it has are not really its own powers at all. For powers of sanction and the use of force are mandated not by the UN as an autonomous entity, but only by the Security Council; that is, by its permanent nation-state members (Whittaker, 1997).⁴ As for the IMF and the World Bank, they are substantially influenced by their principal shareholders who are, again, the most powerful nations. The WTO, on the other hand, has in principle an equal, consensual structure. In practice, only the most powerful nations are able to use the WTO's rules and its dispute settlement procedure to protect or project their interests (Hoekman & Mavroidis, 2000). Furthermore, the rules embodied in the WTO only serve, arguably, to fairly regulate a global economy that, because it already structurally favors the most powerful national economies, provides merely a veneer of fairness (Sachs et al., 1998). In these circumstances it is difficult to see the UN or other global institutions as governing nation-states in a manner that is autonomous, objective, fair, or binding; in a manner, in other words, that could be described as effective, let alone worldcentric.

Today's global institutions, we might conclude, display a pathological *communion* (or fusion) with nation-states, and particularly with the most powerful ones. Instead of being holarchically *above* nations, as would be needed if they were to perform global governance objectively and in a binding fashion, these institutions are instead substantially on the same holonic level as nations. That is, despite their worldcentric pretensions, they still remain subtly, yet decisively, nationcentric. But since these institutions were created by nation-states, perhaps this should be of little surprise.

Alongside this pathology sits its inverse twin: the *agency* of nation-states themselves. As their inability to agree on anything substantive on climate change or on many other global issues shows, they cannot cooperate with each other in many vital areas because of their need to pursue only their short-term national interests (Johnston, 1996). For nation-states, then, there is the problem of *alienation* from each other; an alienation that is expressed in nation-centrism itself. These twin but opposite pathologies—on one side, global institutions that are overly fused with powerful nations and, on the other, nations that are overly alienated from one another—not only allow global problems to keep on worsening, they also elucidate the extremely poor prospects for either the established global institutions or the world's nations to solve global problems if we leave them wholly to their own devices.

Nongovernmental Approaches

But what of the thousands of NGOs that constitute the global justice movement? And what of the many other organizations and approaches that are seeking, in one way or another, to solve or mitigate global crises?

Nongovernmental organizations, particularly campaigning NGOs, have been very successful in bringing global problems to greater public attention. Through widespread campaigns and protests they have succeeded in mobilizing public opinion behind many worthy causes. This is reflected in the dramatic increase in NGO membership over recent decades and in public support for the various approaches the movement has espoused (Johnston, 1996). A selection of these approaches is summarized in Figure 2.

The distinction between nongovernmental green and teal altitude approaches, although somewhat arbitrary, I suggest indicates an important shift in consciousness. Although green approaches reflect a very broad

Altitude	Non-Governmental Approaches					Analysis
Teal (low vision-logic/ post-postmodern)	Corporate social responsibility	Stakeholder capitalism/ Triple-bottom-line accounting	Conscious capitalism/ Social business/ Commons trusts	Ethical consumerism (e.g., fair trade)	Shareholder activism/ Socially responsible investing/ Microcredit	Engagement with economics; dissociation from civics
Green (late rational/ postmodern)	Back to nature/ small communities	Anti-capitalism/ Anti-free trade	Direct action/ Protest	Campaigning NGOs	Charities/ Disaster relief	Dissociation from civics and economics

Figure 2. A selection of nongovernmental approaches to solving global problems.

recognition of global problems and a welcome thrust towards greater equity and ecological sustainability, we can note that they are substantially dissociated from both civics and economics. Dissociated from civics, by their choice to incarnate themselves as pressure groups rather than as political parties; and dissociated from economics, in that they tend to campaign against individual corporations or against wider trends in the economy, such as free trade or even globalization itself. Teal approaches, on the other hand, differ from green in that they indicate a willingness to work *with* the system rather than against it. When it comes to civics, however, teal's dissociation remains similar to green's.

Green Altitude Nongovernmental Approaches

Let us first look in more detail at the cognitive sophistication of green altitude with respect to filling the governance gap. One propensity of green cognition is to identify individual global problems, such as climate change, and, from that to identify the entity seen as causing each problem. If there is climate change, for example, it must be *governments* who are failing to regulate. If there is large-scale pollution, the appropriate *corporation* is singled out for blame. This kind of cause-and-effect thinking is part and parcel of the rational cognitive structure. As John Stewart (2008) points out,

Rational analysis is very effective at modelling systems in which linear chains of cause and effect predominate. However, it is poor at modelling systems in which circular causality is common—i.e., systems in which each element impacts on other elements and they in turn impact back on it, directly or indirectly. Conscious rational analysis alone can rarely work out how such a complex system will unfold through time.

While it is true that individuals at green also identify the larger system to be at fault—such as capitalism, free-trade, tax avoidance, etc.—when it comes to *action*, it tends to focus on single issues or individual entities; on raising awareness and protest. Indeed, in keeping with postmodernism's distaste for meta-narratives, the movement seems to be defined by an overemphasis on diversity at the expense of unity. As one commentator on the World Social Forum observed,

This diversity of opinion and approach is both a strength of the Forum, as well as its principal weakness. The Forum derives strength from this diversity as it provides the opportunity for a very large number of movements and organisations to come

together, each feeling that their views have a place in the open space of the Forum. At the same time the diverse trends and opinions lead, often, to a sense of frustration that the Forum is not able to hammer together a consensus regarding both a strategic understanding and tactics to be applied. (Gupta, 2005).

There are cases, however, where organizations within the movement act on a broader international basis, such as in climate campaigns. But, as I will demonstrate, their attempts to persuade governments to cut carbon emissions take no account of new, but as yet largely unrecognized, stimuli inherent in the globalized economy. These stimuli, I will argue, make it virtually impossible for governments to act substantively and this may explain why green altitude worldviews attempting to fill the governance gap have thus far proven inadequate.

The rational, modern/postmodern cognitive structure tends to operate, then, in a binary, either-or fashion. It is very good indeed at seeing the fish; at identifying all the single issues of concern and the individual entities seen to be at fault. But as I will explain in more detail, what green fails to fully see, is the *water*. That is, it fails to properly recognize the dynamics of the wider collective environment in which all the fish swim and compete and the large extent to which that environment influences their destructive behavior.

Teal Altitude Nongovernmental Approaches

The teal worldview, on the other hand, sees the world more systemically (Wilber, 2006). Rather than working against corporations and the economic system, it seeks to engage with them. Hence the recent explosion in the number of approaches which seek to transform individual corporate or consumer behavior, many of which can be seen in Figure 2. Many of these have been quite successful and have helped raise awareness and alter behaviors.

Nevertheless, one common trait in teal approaches is that engagement with economics tends to act on the *individual*; be it the individual corporation, or individual consumer. The concept of corporate social responsibility (CSR), for example, depends on individual corporations voluntarily deciding to adopt a CSR approach. Ethical consumerism, likewise, depends on individual consumers voluntarily deciding to use their dollars responsibly. This reliance on individual responsibility is inherent in the teal perspective (Wilber, 2006). Meanwhile, as explained earlier, green approaches, albeit for different reasons, similarly tend to focus on individual entities. The common factor between green and teal altitude, then, is that when it comes to *action*, their centers of gravity reside in the *individual* quadrants (the UL and UR).

The Picture Today

Before moving on, I conclude our review of the governance gap by summarizing the recent evolution of governance in the civic line of development in both the LL and LR quadrants (Fig. 3). In Figure 3, it can be seen that nationcentric thinking and national governance structures remain prominent. Nevertheless, within the postmodern era, more egalitarian, multicultural thinking has become prominent, and this is reflected in a more distributed, networked form of governance (Rosenau & Czempiel, 1992). Rather than national governments being effectively the sole actors in the public domain, as they were in the early rational era, governance today, such as it is, tends to be performed by a complex interaction of all players, be they governments, global institutions, global markets, corporations, or NGOs. It is this mode which, in Figure 3, I refer to as *networked governance*. What the teal, early worldcentric level has added is its focus on greater individual consciousness and responsibility; a trend reflected by a multitude of approaches that attempt to elicit voluntary compliance from individual entities, be they citizens or corporations. Industry-wide codes of practice, the UN's Global Compact, and other similar voluntary, non-binding agreements can be regarded as belonging to this wave.⁵ It

	Lower-Left Mode/Orientation		Lower-Right Mode/Orientation	
Turquoise (High vision-logic)	Late worldcentric	Global, aperspectival view; Integration of civics and economics	Binding global governance	Equitable world governance: accommodation of all levels of civic development
Teal (Low vision-logic)	Early worldcentric	Individual responsibility; Dissociation from civics	(Voluntary self-governance)	All entities “do governance” + voluntary, non-binding agreements
Green (Late rational)	Late nationcentric	Multicultural, egalitarian; Dissociation from civics and economics	(Networked governance)	Governments, global institutions, markets, business and NGOs all “do governance” together
Orange (Early rational)	Early nationcentric	Nationalist	Nation-state	Nations as sole actors

Figure 3. The evolution of the civic line of development in the Lower-Left and Lower-Right quadrants.

is this mode of governance I refer to in Figure 3 as *voluntary self-governance*.

Apart from the addition to Figure 3 of the turquoise, high vision-logic civic perspective, readers may notice that the green and teal modes of governance in the LR (i.e., networked governance and voluntary self-governance) are placed in parentheses. I do so for two reasons. Firstly because, in the light of the new stimuli discussed below, it will become even clearer why these modes of governance are proving inadequate. I do so secondly because it is arguable whether these modes can properly be described as holons of governance *at all*. Given that all the holons of governance in the civic holarchy (Local Authority → State → Nation-state) have the capacity to implement binding laws and regulations, to tax and spend, to redistribute wealth, and to provide social safety-nets, it is immediately clear that these vital capacities *are not shared* by either networked governance or voluntary self-governance modes. Nor are they shared to any significant degree by any of the global institutions (Bunzl, 2009a). Absent these critical governance capacities, it is perhaps unsurprising that all attempts short of some kind of binding global governance were always going to prove inadequate. This provides additional corroboration to that of Wilber (2000), who suggests that *only* binding global governance—a form of worldcentric governance disclosed at late vision-logic (turquoise altitude)—can properly provide a substantive solution to global problems (pp. 204-206).

To more completely substantiate the inadequacy of green and teal approaches, let us turn now to the new stimuli in the global economy. Although these stimuli may be present, they have hitherto not generally been recognized. For as Wilber (2000) points out, it is only when we start to see more deeply and completely that our consciousness accesses completely new horizons: “In *transformation* [as opposed to translation] whole new worlds ... disclose themselves. These ‘new worlds’ are not physically located someplace else; they exist simply as a deeper perception (or deeper registration) of the available stimuli in *this* world” (p. 67).

The Water

So, what “available stimuli” are visible to turquoise altitude but still substantially *invisible* to green and teal? To see these stimuli with new eyes, let us look again at something most of us see every day: the newspaper. Below is a selection of newspaper clippings and commentary pertaining to the subject at hand.

Concerning climate change, it has been noted that

Governments remain reluctant to address [this] threat because any country acting alone to curb its greenhouse gas emissions, without similar commitments by other

governments, risks damaging the competitiveness of its industries. (*Financial Times*, November 16, 2006)

With respect to the regulation and taxation of corporations, especially multinationals:

Governments vying to attract inward investment are weighing the advantages of cutting business costs... Tax rates have been falling across the world over the past quarter of a century.... This trend is forcing some experts to the conclusion that governments have embarked on a race to the bottom. (*Financial Times*, January 19, 2007)

Concerning human rights, inter-racial equity and economic justice in developing countries:

South Africa relaxes empowerment rules. The South African government has exempted foreign companies from having to sell a 25% stake in their local operations to black business... The government exempted foreign players because “we had to be mindful that we also have to position South Africa in a global environment where there is fierce competition for investment,” said Mandisi Mpahlwa, South African Minister for trade & industry. (*Financial Times*, December 15, 2006)

Regarding worker’s rights and sweat-shop wage exploitation:

The £25 suit... but at what cost? Asda [part of Walmart] is today offering customers a passable two-piece suit for the price of a round of drinks in a London bar. Bangladeshi student, Shafiqul Islam, said “People can’t survive on £12 a month, but if the government protests, Asda and others will go to China or somewhere else.” (*The London Paper*, January 22, 2007)

And concerning attempts to regulate global financial markets following perhaps the most severe financial crisis in history:

Row erupts as watchdog calls for tax on the City. A fresh row has erupted over “excessive” banking bonuses after Lord Adair Turner, chairman of the City watchdog, claimed Britain’s financial sector has grown “beyond a socially reasonable size.” His comments caused an uproar in financial centres yesterday, including Edinburgh, with leading figures and organisations warning that Britain would lose yet another major industry to competitors abroad. John Cridland, deputy director-general of the Confederation of British Industry, said: “The government and regulators should be very wary of undermining the international competitiveness of the UK’s financial services industry.” (*The Scotsman*, November 29, 2009)

The Green Altitude View

Let us first discuss how green altitude tends to see these “available stimuli.” Green altitude, I suggest, would firstly see the inadequacy of ineffective or negligent governments. It would also see the greed and abuse of exploitative corporations. Hence it would protest against them, seeing them as the prime causes of the problem.

But if we look again at this with more penetrating eyes, we see that the agent at work is not individual

governments themselves so much as the *fear* each has that acting will harm their national economic competitiveness; a fear induced by the ability of capital to move freely across national borders. Thus, governments are not acting autonomously out of free and independent choice, but largely out of fear for how markets may react and what *other* governments may do.

Likewise with corporations. Any corporation refusing to take advantage of lower taxes or labor costs in other countries would only make itself uncompetitive compared to those that do. To refrain would mean lower profits, a relatively lower stock price and, ultimately, the prospect either of bankruptcy or an unwelcome takeover. With corporations, too, the problem lies not with any *individual* corporation so much as with the competitive dynamic *between* them. Whereas green sees the entities as free, autonomous agents, this deeper view reveals they are very substantially guided by market forces and how their peers may or may not react to those forces.

Seen in this deeper way we see that, far from being autonomous entities, governments and corporations are very substantially guided by competitiveness concerns and are caught in a global vicious circle from which they cannot ordinarily escape. This deeper view reveals, in other words, that almost regardless of the particular global issue under examination—be it climate change, global poverty, financial market regulation, etc.—the problem lies not with the fish but in the competitive environment of the *water*. It is this underlying, global dynamic that represents, I suggest, the key barrier to solving global problems; a dynamic I call *destructive international competition*.

I should at this point acknowledge that some organizations operating at green or teal altitude do, to a limited extent, acknowledge the problem of destructive competition, or “the race to the bottom” as it is sometimes called (Daly, 1993). But what they still fail to see, in my experience, is the *primacy* of destructive international competition—the fact that each nation’s (or corporation’s) short-term need to maintain its international competitiveness necessarily trumps every other concern, be it climate change or any other—and, moreover, that it can only continue to do so.

The failure to recognize this occurs, I suggest, because postmodern perspectives tend to reject all hierarchies (Beck & Cowan, 1996; Wilber, 2000). Seeing all global problems as being equally important means that if destructive international competition is detected at all, green altitude perceives it as just another global problem alongside all the others. This failure to see its primacy, to see it in its worldcentric fullness, to see how it substantially *determines* the behavior of all the entities means that green altitude also critically fails to see something else: that beyond raising public awareness and winning occasional minor concessions, destructive international competition renders green approaches substantially futile. Green altitude’s failure to see *any* of this thus reveals a fragmented and incomplete civic worldview; a worldview that, because it sees only the fish but not the worldcentric water, remains by default essentially nationcentric.

The Teal Altitude View

Identifying why teal altitude fails to recognize destructive international competition is more problematic. Teal represents, supposedly, the leap into second-tier awareness; an awareness that is systemic, worldcentric, and should therefore detect a phenomenon such as destructive international competition. But perhaps because of its individualistic center of gravity in the UL/UR, teal misses it altogether. For, destructive international competition is, essentially, a *collective* phenomenon that arises in the LL/LR.

To more clearly unpack this, it may help to look at some actual solutions proposed by those one could reasonably expect to express a teal civic worldview. A good example would be the authors of the book, *Be the Solution: How Entrepreneurs and Conscious Capitalists can Solve All the World’s Problems* (Strong & Mackey, 2009). Contributed to by many eminent people, including John Mackey, Muhammad Yunus, Hernando de Soto, Don Beck, and others, the book outlines various teal solutions. Below, I look at two of the most important.⁶

Conscious Capitalism

Conscious capitalism is the idea that individual entrepreneurs, if acting from an enlightened, conscious perspective, can solve many of the world's problems. There is no doubting the desirability and positive difference this would make. The difficulty is the assumption that if entrepreneurs are ethical *as individuals*, their aggregate behavior will necessarily *also* be. But this ignores that in large-scale markets where market players are both numerous and anonymous, there is a very different dynamic. For when myriad players compete, often internationally, no player can know who all its competitors are, nor whether they can be relied upon to apply "consciously capitalist" (i.e., stakeholder) principles. Indeed, Integral Theory itself is founded on the realization that different societies, and therefore different entrepreneurs, will hold different business value-sets; some perhaps at teal or green altitude, but most at orange or lower. And it is the unpredictable mix of these values in an anonymous global market which is likely, I suggest, to lead conscious capitalists to gradually abandon or compromise their principles to ensure they stay competitive and survive. Or as business people sometimes put it, "If *we* don't do it, our competitors will." Here, then, is where teal's overemphasis on the UL/UR exposes its fundamental weakness and partiality.

Building on this assumption, the book suggests that traditional profit-centered businesses (i.e., businesses that adopt a "shareholder value" approach) would perform even better if they adopted a consciously capitalist, stakeholder approach. Hence the book's claim that if conscious capitalism were adopted by everyone, that would solve all the world's problems. To substantiate their claim, the authors assert "The real question is, how does a traditional profit-centred business fare when it competes against a stakeholder-centred business?" (Strong et al., 2009, p. 84). To clinch the point, a study is cited that shows stakeholder businesses generally out-perform profit-centered businesses over the long-term—a study the accuracy of which we need not doubt. But there are really *two* questions that need answering, both of which go well beyond the authors' thinking. The first is, "Granted that stakeholder businesses generally outperform profit-centered businesses, does that fact necessarily mean profit-centered businesses can and will shift to a stakeholder approach?"

To this, the answer may seem obvious: Of course they will! But the point missed is that if we take a look at what is actually happening in the world, there is usually only one major company in any given market sector that makes a stakeholder or ethical approach the center of its business model and brand image. In the U.K. cosmetics sector, for example, there is only The Body Shop that takes that approach, and no one else. In the U.S. ice cream sector there is only Ben & Jerry's, and no one else. In contract flooring there is only Interface, and no one else. Why is this? If adopting a stakeholder approach means improved performance, as Whole Foods CEO Mackey insists, surely companies would be falling over themselves to emulate one another?

The reason they are not is perhaps because, while it may doubtless be attractive and profitable for one major company in a given sector to make environmental and social responsibility into a profitable niche, that may only make it harder, rather than easier, for competitors to follow. This is because the sums a competitor would have to invest to ethically outcompete an already-ethical market leader may be better and more profitably spent by differentiating itself in other ways; by investing in superior product quality, for example, or in branding, more catchy advertising, lower prices, or superior customer service. Indeed, as the widely respected expert on competition, Professor Michael E. Porter (1996), points out, "Competitive strategy is about being different. It means deliberately choosing a different set of activities to deliver a unique mix of value" (p. 45).

So, this not only suggests it is doubtful a stakeholder model will generally cause others to follow, it also begs a second question: "If two or more major stakeholder companies ever competed head-to-head in a given, large-scale market, would they be able to consistently maintain their ethical, stakeholder approach?" Or would they instead find themselves compromising it as they encounter, not only each other, but many others in the market who may have altogether different business values? Would they end up abandoning it, in other words, in favor of a profit-centered approach as long-term ethical considerations were steadily sacrificed at the altar of short-term competitive survival?

The difficulty in answering this is that, if we are correct about our *first* question (i.e., that one major stakeholder company in a given market makes it unlikely competitors will follow), we will never get a proper answer to the second question at all! And that fact itself demonstrates the partialness of UL/UR, stakeholder approaches, be it corporate social responsibility (CSR), the UN's Global Compact, shareholder activism, triple-bottom-line accounting, or any other. For they all focus on the *individual* corporation and not on the *collective* dynamics of the market in which the individual corporation operates. They fail to recognize, in other words, that the dynamics of the water are fundamentally different and, moreover, that they are corrosive of any good intentions that may exist in the UL/UR. Unless, that is, they are also addressed by binding governance in the collective quadrants.

Commons Trusts

A further, important claim in *Be the Solution* is that property rights can solve virtually all the world's environmental problems. From this comes the approach of creating environmental trusts (or Commons Trusts). These would be bodies having a legal obligation to preserve specific environmental assets or species habitats, or even the entire global atmosphere (Quilligan, 2009). The idea is to ensure, not only that the trustees of the asset have a legal responsibility to protect it, but that any corporation or person can be charged for using the asset or can, if they damage it, be sued. In that way our impact on the environment would be priced directly into the goods and services we consume, so giving appropriate signals to change our behavior.

Although Commons Trusts would be appropriate in many contexts, what is overlooked are the potential adverse consequences if any nation implemented them unilaterally. If taxes were shifted from income and wealth to a carbon tax in one nation alone, for example, or if environmental trusts were widely established in that country alone, many domestic businesses could find their costs increasing. And in today's global market, that could make them uncompetitive with their peers elsewhere, potentially resulting in increased unemployment in the nation concerned. Any such country, then, is likely to make its economy *less* competitive in the global market; distinctly *less* attractive to foreign investors and corporations. This potentially constitutes a powerful disincentive to any nation and may therefore prevent the widespread implementation of national-level commons trusts in the first place.

Here, again, by failing to recognize the worldcentric, LR phenomenon of capital that moves freely across national borders—the very phenomenon, that is, which gives rise to destructive international competition—we can see how teal approaches subtly presume a *national* political-economic context. That presumption, in other words, discloses by default teal's essentially nationcentric level of civic awareness and its inadequacy, consequently, to address today's global problems.

Destructive International Competition

I hope it is now clear that destructive international competition to a very significant extent *determines* (i.e., constrains or guides) the behavior of governments and corporations. Moreover, this dynamic has the nature of a vicious circle; a circle all governments are caught in, cannot see beyond, and cannot ordinarily escape. As such, it should not be a surprise that governments fail to act, nor that they continue to fail, because their need to maintain their national short-term economic competitiveness remains paramount. Destructive international competition I am suggesting, then, represents the crucial deeper reality—the deeper view of the available stimuli—those at teal altitude or lower levels of civic consciousness do not generally see.

Race to the Bottom and Regulatory Chill

Political economists will know that the theory of destructive international competition is similar, but not

identical, to what is more commonly known as the “race to the bottom” (Daly, 1993). Race to the bottom suggests a progressive, competitive *down-leveling* of social, environmental, and tax regulations between nations. Destructive international competition, on the other hand, while it can encompass such a race, can equally be characterized by a simple *inability* of governments to act adequately or at all; what is sometimes known as “regulatory chill” (Blair, 2008).

Race-to-the-bottom theory, political scientist David J. Blair (2008) points out, “...has been cited by a number of environmental groups that oppose international trade and investment agreements as well as the broader process of economic globalisation” (p. 2). As he explains, however, “The claims of these various actors have spawned a considerable number of studies that challenge the existence of an environmental race to the bottom or the likelihood of such a race” (Blair, 2008, p. 3). My reasons for including such a widely challenged theory within my definition of destructive international competition is therefore required.

Although the mix of factors which determine a nation’s competitiveness will undoubtedly vary quite widely from nation to nation according to differing geographic, economic, political, and cultural factors (Porter, 1996, p. 155), the aggregate result for all nations seems, under globalization, to be substantially the same: that each nation seems relatively constrained to pursuing only policies which will not upset the balance of its own particular mix of factors. For developed nations, such as the European Union states, maintaining relatively high social and environmental standards has generally been possible despite competition from lower-cost countries. But that, I suggest, is only because of the presence of other important offsetting factors in the mix (e.g., the attractiveness of its large, rich, and educationally advanced markets). For developing nations without such offsetting factors, very low taxes and weak environmental regulations may be the only ways they can attract sufficient inward investment and jobs.

The point, however, is that neither developed nor developing nations seem able to dramatically *alter* their policies toward the much higher social or environmental standards now required to address global problems. The contention of mainstream economists that instances of maintained (or even increased) levels of environmental regulation show that competition does not necessarily lead to a “race to the bottom” is therefore entirely beside the point. For what seems clear is that it *does* at least lead to significant “regulatory chill.” Whether social and environmental protection regulations are racing to the bottom, staying still or rising slightly, then, is not the issue. Because whichever one takes to be true, global problems are still far outpacing regulation—and destructive international competition, it seems, remains the central barrier.

Blair (2008) concludes, interestingly, that “Race to the bottom critics tend not to devote much attention to [regulatory chill]...” and their neglect of it is, he says,

a major shortcoming of many analyses of the impact of globalisation on environmental regulation because [regulatory chill] involves a much larger number of countries than those that are most likely to weaken or dismantle existing environmental laws and regulations. (p. 7)

In conclusion, destructive international competition encompasses both regulatory chill and race-to-the-bottom theory, but instead of simply seeing them *in isolation* (i.e., in terms of whether regulations either weaken or stay still), it sees them *relative* to the urgency of global problems; it sees them, that is, systemically and worldcentrically.

The Universal Barrier to Evolutionary Progress

It is worth mentioning that if we look back to earlier crises in evolution, we find that the dynamic of destructive competition has always been—and likely always will be—the key barrier to evolutionary progress. As evolutionary biologist John Stewart (2000) points out, this barrier applies

to all living processes. The circumstances that cause it are universal. Individuals who use resources to help others without benefit to themselves will be out-competed. They will be disadvantaged compared to those who use the resources for their own benefit. ... The barrier has applied whether the evolutionary mechanisms are those that adapt corporations, individual humans, other multi-cellular organisms, single cells or autocatalytic sets. (p. 57)

In identifying destructive international competition, then, we are deeply connecting with what is the timeless, universal barrier all societies of organisms threatened with extinction have had to overcome. If we fail to deal with destructive international competition, then, quite simply, we fail.

But this identification in our present context of a single, key, underlying barrier also presents us with an opportunity. For it suggests that to solve virtually all our global problems, we need focus only on *one* overarching issue. We need focus, that is, only on how destructive international competition may be overcome; on how it can be brought within a higher, cooperative, international governance framework that makes competition constructive rather than destructive. This does not mean green or teal approaches should stop. Rather, it implies that the emphasis should now be on achieving an appropriate form of binding, people-centered, global governance.

Pseudo-democracy and the Legitimation Crisis

There is, however, a further critical point, because the severe restriction on government action that destructive international competition imposes is not its only unwelcome consequence. Of particular importance is its effect on democracy.

Since the ability of capital and corporations to move freely across national borders forces governments to maintain their international competitiveness, their policies are severely restricted. In today's global economy, only those policies that enhance or defend national economic competitiveness are permissible. Moreover, this is not a political choice but an existential necessity. Thus, all parties in power in virtually any country not surprisingly end up implementing substantially the same, narrow, business-and market-friendly agenda. This is why we find left-of-center parties adopting policies traditionally espoused by right-of-center parties. It's why New Labour's Tony Blair was often said to be the best Conservative leader since Margaret Thatcher. Or, as former Conservative prime minister, John Major, once put it, "I went swimming leaving my clothes on the bank and when I came back Tony Blair was wearing them" (*The Week*, 29 October, 1999).

While the mechanics of free and fair elections still exist, the quality of democracy has been drastically hollowed out, reducing it to what I have elsewhere described as *pseudo-democracy* (Bunzl, 2001, pp. 30-36); a kind of electoral charade in which, in terms of macroeconomic and environmental policy at least, it no longer matters much which party we vote for, or whether we bother to vote at all. This is how destructive competition severely constrains governments and, by consequence, the ability of citizens to remedy the situation through conventional democratic processes. What all this amounts to is a "legitimation crisis"; a breakdown in the adequacy of the existing worldview and its governance systems to command allegiance (Habermas, 1973).⁷ Not only are our governments stuck in a vicious circle they cannot escape, citizens no longer have any effective means of redress—a perilous situation indeed.

Design Criteria for Worldcentric Civic Action

Destructive competition and pseudo-democracy, then, are vital phenomena we must understand if global problems and the global legitimation crisis are to be overcome. Indeed, any genuinely worldcentric civic-political action would not only have to be global in scope to take destructive international competition fully

into account, pseudo-democracy shows that, to succeed, the vehicle for doing so cannot possibly be national political parties. That is, pseudo-democracy dictates that any party in power, however ethical it may be, and in whatever country it may operate, would be quite unable to reconcile global (or national) environmental sustainability with its need to maintain national economic competitiveness. That, indeed, is why all *present* political parties are failing to address these issues. Indeed, the very object of a political party is to become a national government, so for any would-be integral political movement to incarnate itself as a political party would be to adopt essentially the same regime (or code) as a nation-state; a regime that is by definition nationcentric, and cannot therefore be reconciled with worldcentric civic action.⁸ Political parties are simply too embedded in, too pathologically fused with, the nationcentric system they would seek to transform, which is something of an inherent contradiction.

Equally, however, the nongovernmental route of green and teal approaches fares no better. For governments' paramount need to maintain their national competitiveness dictates, as we have seen, that regardless of how well NGOs may campaign, and however loudly they may protest, their demands can only continue to go largely unmet. Teal UL/UR approaches too, we saw, are neither mandatory nor sufficiently widespread and so are unlikely to succeed unless complemented and completed by some form of binding global governance in the LR.

A genuinely worldcentric form of civic action, then, would have to be embodied in an unprecedented type of hybrid organization; a *transformative* organization that is neither a conventional political party nor a conventional NGO. Moreover, to overcome the barrier of destructive international competition, it would have to advocate a process of achieving binding global governance that avoids any nation, corporation, or citizen losing out unduly to any of their peers. To ensure governments were driven to cooperate with one another, it would, moreover, have to possess considerable political leverage—considerable *agency*—as well as be capable of appealing to nations, cultures, and political systems at all levels of development. In short, it would have to be an emergent organization capable of transcending, negating, and including party politics and nation-states.

This gives rise, of course, to the practical question of *how* this could occur, and *what* such an organization might actually look like? Elsewhere (in Bunzl, 2009b) I show how such an organization is already operating in the real world and, moreover, how it is consistent with Wilber's "20 Tenets," and particularly with those which relate specifically to vertical transformation. If we care to look, in other words—if we care to *activate* a worldcentric civic consciousness—practical answers may be more readily available than we might at first think.

The Nation-state: From Thanatos to Eros

What I have described above points toward the conclusion that a legitimation crisis is in full swing and that, because meaningful translation has all but broken down, the holon of the nation-state is reaching the end of its life. Absent transformation, the "death drive" of Thanatos looms increasingly large; a death drive that would affect us all.

In Figure 4, I retrace the holonic life-stages of the nation-state with the aid of an S-curve, showing how the nation-state has proceeded through the stages of Unity, Differentiation, Dissonance, Crisis, and now finds itself in the Fragility Zone; the zone in which crises occur frequently.⁹ It is how humanity responds to these crises that will determine whether the nation-state either survives by becoming a part of a new, higher whole or whether it regresses into chaos. As Wilber (2000) notes, "The modern nation-state, founded upon initial rationality, has run into its own internal contradictions or limitations, and can only be released by a vision-logic/planetary transformation" (p. 192). We must move, then, to a higher, worldcentric civic consciousness and a form of civic action capable of achieving global governance.

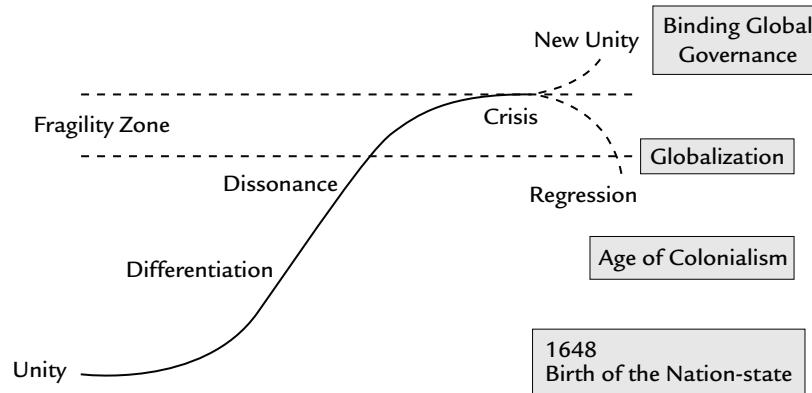


Figure 4. The holonic life-stages of the nation-state.

Global Cooperative Governance: Denial in the Face of Necessity

Despite the oncoming crisis, few of us choose to consider or investigate global governance, the integral community included. One reason is because green and teal civic worldviews, being nationcentric, believe that interventions within the current nation-state system can still somehow shift the world from its present ruinous path; that our global crisis can somehow be overcome *without* a fundamental transformation. Given the uncertainty transformation always involves, it is perhaps understandable that people refuse to accept that nothing short of a move to global governance can suffice. But the problem is that, all the while green and teal approaches encourage us to believe in the effectiveness of further intervention at the *existing* level, we naturally avoid the increasingly obvious need to move to the next, *global* level. And so, when it comes to binding global governance, too often we do nothing about it. This is reinforced by the almost universal perception that global governance will be extremely difficult, if not impossible, to achieve—that “it’ll never happen.” Thus, despite the increasingly obvious need for binding global governance, it is immediately cast aside as a solution. Just because the mountain to be climbed seems so daunting, we pretend it doesn’t need climbing; we pretend, even, that the mountain doesn’t exist at all.

An example of this was subtly demonstrated in the U.K. news digest, *The Week*. One of its articles covered protests that took place in the United Kingdom during December 2010 orchestrated by UK Uncut, a campaign group. The protest targeted Philip Green, owner of clothing retailer Topshop, who is said to have avoided U.K. tax by placing his company in the ownership of his wife who is based in Monaco, a well-known tax haven. But as many media commentators pointed out, the tougher U.K. tax regime called for by the protesters would only see still more corporations move their operations elsewhere. But here is my point: instead of pointing out that the corporate ability to move elsewhere necessitates some form of global cooperation or governance, or instead of drawing readers’ attention to any efforts governments, the UN, or other global institutions may (or may not) be making in that direction, the article simply concludes as follows: “The politicians we vote into power have to consider the unromantic possibility that a tougher tax regime will push companies to relocate in places such as Switzerland” (*The Week*, Issue 798, December 2010).

What should be clear, here, is that the ability of companies to relocate should, if society were not in denial, be merely the *start* of the article’s discussion about the possibility of global cooperation and governance, not the *end* of it. The point of critical concern, then, is that society’s civic consciousness is so hobbled and truncated that global cooperation and governance are not even mentioned. The mountain, let alone the need to climb it, is instantly denied. Instead of accepting the central, logical, and indeed blindingly obvious conclusion that a global market can only become equitable and sustainable with global cooperation and binding governance—with a global, noospheric agreement of some kind—we tune out. And instead of realizing,

as Wilber (2000) has stated, that “Anything short of that noospheric accord *will continue to destroy the biosphere*” (p. 541), we switch off. Despite the evidence that only global governance can suffice, people—including those at green or teal altitude—comprehensively avoid the issue. Thus, just as we fast approach the precipice over which only chaos and regression await, we find we have comprehensively split ourselves off from the difficult, painful, yet unavoidable mountain that must be climbed if global problems are to be solved.

But perhaps our denial has an additional cause. Because, if we accept in the very depths of our souls that governments are stuck in a vicious circle they cannot ordinarily escape, we would *also* have to accept that only we, ordinary citizens, can possibly resolve the situation. By this I do not mean anarchy and taking to the streets. Rather, an unprecedented entity that is capable of transcending, negating, and including nation-states and enfolding them within a more encompassing global embrace, can only start with citizens. It can only start *with us*. But that is a responsibility we have not embraced; for as George Bernard Shaw so rightly noted, “Liberty means responsibility. That is why most men dread it.” This dread at once reveals, then, both the depth of our fear and the true evolutionary lesson of our times; a lesson which not only calls us, unavoidably, to a genuinely worldcentric civic consciousness, but above all, to the more fearless and earnest taking of our global civic responsibility upon which our species’ survival depends.

NOTES

¹ Ultimately, all problems manifest themselves at the local level (since that is where we physically are). But many, such as global warming, are global in nature. Perceiving this, however, requires worldcentric awareness; and perceiving global governance as necessary to solve it, requires worldcentric *civic* awareness. It is recognized, however, that properly establishing the existence of a civic line of development would require a fuller investigation. For the moment it is posited simply to help us focus on the issue.

² Elsewhere in my writing, I have hitherto called this “the human social holarchy.” Typically, within Integral Theory a line is isolated to a single quadrant, although it is recognized that the line will have correlates in the other three quadrants. Research must establish whether a civic line is present in all four quadrants.

³ Thus, as Wilber (2000) points out,

In human affairs ... most of us resist the temptation to describe a social holon, such as a State, as being literally a superorganism, because all organisms have priority over all of their components, and yet with the rise of democratic structures, we like to think that the State is subservient to the people, and to the degree that that is true, then the social system is not a true organism.... Further, the State, unlike a concrete individual, does not have a locus of self-prehension, a unitary feeling *as a oneness*. ... And finally, the parts in this social system [i.e. individual citizens] are conscious, but the “whole” is not. (pp. 72-73)

⁴ Chapter VII of the UN Charter provides for the possibility of mandatory resolutions, sanctions, and the authorization of the use of force. But the determination of these issues lies solely with the Security Council.

⁵ Please see the UN Global Compact official website: <http://www.unglobalcompact.org>.

⁶ Much of the discussion in the following two sections (“Conscious Capitalism” and “Commons Trusts”) is taken, with kind permission, from my review published in *Integral Leadership Review* (Vol. X, No. 2, March 2010).

⁷ *Voter Turnout Since 1945—A Global Report*, available from the Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (www.idea.int), shows that for many years voter turnouts were on the increase but, from the 1980s onwards, they went into decline. It is perhaps no coincidence that it was around this time that the Reagan-Thatcher “Big Bang” deregulation of financial markets took place.

⁸ In this sense, the prospects for the Swiss Integral Party (<http://www.integrale-politik.ch>) to achieve anything meaningful seem doubtful.

⁹ These life-stages are analogous to Wilber’s Fulfillment, Dissonance, and Insight/Opening, as explained in *A Theory of Everything* (2001, p. 35). For more on this, see Bunzl (2009a). The S-curve is derived, with grateful acknowledgment, from *After the Clockwork Universe* by Sally Goerner (1999).

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