

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 world-centric 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 nation-centrally rather than world-centrally. I explore this limitation in the light of destructive international competition; a key and potentially catastrophic phenomenon which, it is argued, shows why only a world-centric, late vision-logic (turquoise altitude) civic consciousness can disclose solutions to the global crisis. Ways in which green and teal 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.

The Civic Line of Development

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 nature¹, s/he would see no need for national governance at all. His/her civic consciousness would be merely local or ethno-centric. Such a citizen would recognise 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 altitude Orange or higher, on the other hand, recognise 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 civilised survival, it is notable that only 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 altitude Teal, civic consciousness remains, as we will be arguing, at best nation-centric. Our emphasis on global civics indicates that global problems must first be *perceived* as such; a world-centric perception that indicates that merely technical solutions or national (or local) politics cannot suffice. Instead, a vertical transformation towards a form of binding global governance is necessary.

We distinguish the civic from the political line of development 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.

The Civic Holarchy

Like all lines of development, the civic line tetra-evolves and manifests in all four quadrants. Civic holons are most obvious in the LR quadrant; in what we are 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 still-larger nation-state. In others, 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.

We end the civic holarchy with nation-states because although we have 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 UR correlate of civic holons at each level. Meanwhile the civic *consciousness* of an individual citizen represents the UL correlate. Similarly, the civic culture of a society will manifest in the LL and this 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 amongst those claiming an integral level of awareness, would by now have evolved well beyond a Rational, nation-centric level to a genuinely world-centric level. For as Ken Wilber 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* [his emphasis] be recognized and responded to from a global, world-centric 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” (Wilber, 2000 p. 525).

But if the Integral community, amongst others, had evolved to such a level, one would expect it to be engaged in various forms of world-centric 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, integralists seem markedly reluctant to engage in global civic action. As political commentator Scott Payne concurs, “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 (Payne, 2010).”

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

The Nation-centric Worldview (The Enlightenment – the Present)

Rationality and Modernity (in the Left Hand), and with them nation-states (in the LR), emerged out of the prior mythic-membership structure with the western Enlightenment (Habermas 1979; Wilber, 2000). The prior, mythic (Amber) worldview recognised only those sharing the same tribe or religious belief; an *ethno-centric* 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-level rationality came a more encompassing worldview. As Habermas points out, formal operational rationality established the postconventional stages of “civil liberties” or “legal freedom” for “all those bound by law” (Habermas, 1979). 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-seventeenth 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 vs. out-group was reflected in the competitive, Colonial era whereby the rational worldview, being predominantly at altitude Orange, 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 (eg. 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 *internalised* 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 (FlexFlow) leading edge

But what changes did the Late-rational (postmodern) worldview bring to this earlier, quite xenophobic form of nation-centrism? And what of substance has the emergent, low vision-logic (FlexFlow) 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 nation-centric towards a more world-centric view (Appiah, 2008). And yet our mode of governance and, as I shall explain, our *civic* consciousness, remain decidedly nation-centric. What seems to have happened is that while many aspects in both LL and LR have become globalized (i.e. world-centric), this has not occurred to the same extent in the civic line of development. As Greg Wilpert 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” (Wilpert, 2004).

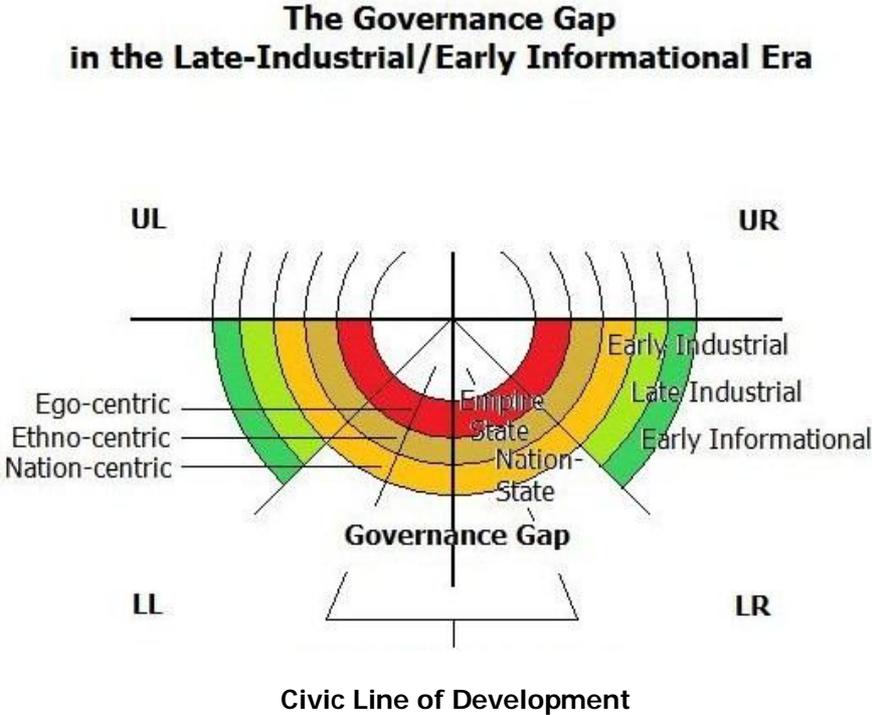


Figure 1

In the postmodern era, and amongst those at a Teal (low vision-logic) level, 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 *world*-centric 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 *nation*-centric. This mismatch or “governance gap” can be seen in Fig. 1 by the missing green and teal segments in the civic line of development in both LL and LR quadrants.

But why do such mismatches or gaps arise? They occur, Wilber 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” (Wilber, 2004).

The problem, then, is that our techno-economic base (in the LR) is now world-centric, as are many associated problems such as global warming, global financial market instability, and so on. But our *civic* consciousness—the very way we understand world problems and how to deal with them—still remains essentially nation-centric, as does our mode of governance (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 organisations we mentioned earlier.

As we noted, there are a number of institutions operating in the LR beyond the nation-state, most notably the United Nations (UN), the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and the World Trade Organisation (WTO). Equally, there are many non-governmental organisations (NGOs), some operating on a global scale. These would include organisations 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 organisations and their roles; only to give a brief overview of their position in the bigger picture we 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.

The global institutions, as we suggested, remain heavily influenced by nation-states, and particularly by the most powerful amongst 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 Council⁴; that is, by its permanent nation-state members (Whittaker, 1997). 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 which, because it already structurally favours 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 the 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 world-centric.

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 world-centric pretensions, they still remain subtly, yet decisively, nation-centric; still bound within the nation-centric mindset. 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 anything substantive on climate change or on many other global issues shows, they cannot commune (i.e. co-operate) 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 which 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 which 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.

Non-Governmental Approaches

But what of the very many thousands of NGOs around the world that constitute the global justice movement? And what of all the many other organisations and approaches that are seeking, in one way or another, to solve or mitigate our global crisis?

NGOs, 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 wide selection of these is summarised in Fig. 2 and we are suggesting they may, broadly, be grouped into two developmental levels: Green: Late-Rational (postmodern), and Teal: Low Vision-logic (FlexFlow).

Non-Governmental approaches to Filling the Governance Gap

Altitude	Non-Governmental Approaches					Analysis
Green: Late-Rational / Post-modern	Back to nature/small communities	Anti-capitalism/ Anti-Free Trade	Direct action/ Protest	Campaigning NGOs	Charities/ Disaster relief	Dissociation from Civics and Economics
Teal: Low Vision-logic / Flex-Flow	Corporate social responsibility (CSR)	Stakeholder capitalism / Triple-bottom-line accounting	Conscious capitalism / social business / Commons trusts	Ethical consumerism (eg. Fair Trade)	Shareholder activism/ Socially Responsible Investing/ Micro-credit	Engagement with Economics; dissociation from Civics

Figure 2

The distinction between Green and Teal non-governmental approaches, although somewhat arbitrary, I suggest indicates an important shift in consciousness. Although Green approaches reflect a very broad 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 Non-governmental Approaches

Let us first look in more detail at Green’s cognitive sophistication with respect to filling the Governance Gap.

One propensity of Green 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 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.” (Stewart, 2008).

While it is true that Green also identifies the larger system to be at fault—such as capitalism, free-trade, or 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 over-emphasis 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 organisations within the movement act on a broader international basis, such as in climate campaigns. But, as we will see, their attempts to persuade governments to cut carbon emissions take no account of new, but as yet largely unrecognised, stimuli inherent in the globalized economy. These stimuli, we will argue, make it virtually impossible for governments to act substantively and this may explain why Green’s attempts to fill the Governance Gap are proving 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 we will see in more detail, what Green fails to fully see, is the *water*. It fails to properly recognise the dynamics of the wider collective environment in which all the fish swim and compete and the large extent to which that environment *determines* their destructive behaviour.

Teal Non-governmental Approaches

The Teal (FlexFlow) worldview, on the other hand, sees the world more systemically (Beck & Cowan, 1996). 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 behaviour, many of which can be seen in Fig. 2. Many of these have been quite successful and have helped raise awareness and alter behaviours.

Nevertheless, one common trait in Teal approaches is that their 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, we can note, is inherent in Teal (Beck & Cowan, 1996). Meanwhile, as we saw, Green approaches, albeit for different reasons, similarly tend to focus

on individual entities. The common factor between Green and Teal, then, is that when it comes to *action*, their centres of gravity reside in the *individual* quadrants (in the UL/UR).

The Picture Today

Before moving on, we conclude our review of the Governance Gap by summarising, in Fig. 3, the recent evolution of governance in the civic line of development in both LL and LR quadrants. This summary therefore includes the approaches we have discussed hitherto.

	Lower-Left		Lower-Right	
	Mode/Orientation		Mode/Orientation	
Orange (Early Rational)	Early Nation-centric	Nationalist	Nation-state	Nations as sole actors
Green (Late Rational)	Late Nation-centric	Multi-cultural, egalitarian. Dissociation from civics & economics	(Networked Governance)	Governments, global institutions, markets, business & NGOs all "do governance" together
Teal (Low Vision-logic)	Early World-centric	Individual responsibility. Dissociation from civics	(Voluntary Self-Governance)	All entities "do governance" + Voluntary, non-binding agreements
Turquoise (High Vision-logic)	Late World-centric	Global, aperspectival view. Integration of civics & economics	Binding Global Governance	Equitable world governance: accommodation of all levels of civic development

Figure 3

From Fig. 3 we can see that nation-centric thinking and national governance structures remain prominent. Nevertheless, with the Green, postmodern era, more egalitarian, multi-cultural 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 Fig. 3, we refer to as Networked Governance. What the Teal, early world-centric level has added is its focus on greater individual consciousness and responsibility; a trend reflected by a multitude of approaches which attempt to elicit voluntary compliance from individual entities, be they citizens or corporations. Industry-wide codes of practice, the UN’s Global Compact⁵, and other similar voluntary, non-binding agreements can be regarded as belonging to this wave. It is this mode of governance we refer to in Fig. 3 as Voluntary Self-Governance.

Apart from the addition to Fig. 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 brackets. We do so for two reasons. Firstly because, in the light of the new stimuli we will discuss shortly, it will become even clearer why these modes of governance are proving inadequate. We 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 those such as Wilber who suggest that *only* binding global governance—a form of world-centric governance disclosed at late vision-logic (Turquoise)—can properly provide a substantive solution to global problems (Wilber, 2000, p. 204-6).

To more completely substantiate the inadequacy of Green and Teal approaches, we turn now to the new stimuli present in the global economy we referred to earlier. For although these stimuli may be *present*, they have hitherto not generally been recognised. For as Wilber 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” (Wilber, 2000, p. 67).

The Water

So, what “available stimuli” are visible to Turquoise 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 newspapers. Below, we give a selection of newspaper clippings pertaining to the subject at hand. We will then try to understand those clippings more deeply and completely.

Concerning climate change, the London *Financial Times* (November 16, 2006) 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.”

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:

“S 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 View

Let us first discuss how Green tends to see these “available stimuli”. Green, 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 agents; 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, as Green would believe, 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 labour 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 we may be most concerned with—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 we are calling *destructive international competition*.

We should at this point acknowledge that some organizations operating at altitude Green or Teal 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.

Green’s failure to recognize this occurs, I suggest, because postmodern perspectives tend to reject all hierarchies (Beck & Cowan, 1996; Wilber, 2000). Only able to see global problems only on a single level, rather than recognizing that some transcend others, means that if destructive international competition is detected at all, Green sees it as just another global problem alongside all the others. This failure to see its *primacy*, to see it in its world-centric *fullness*, to see how it substantially *determines* the behavior of all the entities means that Green 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’s failure to see *any* of this thus reveals a flat, fragmented, and incomplete civic worldview; a worldview which, because it sees only the fish but not the world-centric water, remains by default essentially nation-centric.

The Teal View

Identifying why Teal fails to recognize destructive international competition is more problematic. Teal represents, supposedly, the leap into second tier awareness; an awareness which is systemic, world-centric, and should therefore detect phenomena such as destructive international competition. But perhaps because of its individualistic centre 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 we could reasonably expect to express a Teal (or higher) 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* by Michael Strong (Strong, 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. Here, we 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 behaviour 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 realisation that different societies, and therefore different entrepreneurs, will hold different business value-sets; some perhaps at altitude Teal or Green, 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 over-emphasis on the UL/UR exposes its fundamental weakness and partiality.

Building on this false assumption, the book then suggests that traditional profit-centred businesses (i.e. businesses which 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 that "*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, they go on to cite a study which shows that stakeholder businesses generally out-perform profit-centred 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 out-perform profit-centred businesses, does that fact necessarily mean profit-centred 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's actually happening in the world, we find there is usually only *one* major company in any given market sector that makes a stakeholder or ethical approach the centre of its business model and brand image. In the UK 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 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 out-compete an already-ethical market leader may be better and more profitably spent by differentiating itself and its products in other ways; by investing in superior product quality, for example, or in branding, in more catchy advertising, lower prices or superior customer service. Indeed, as the widely respected expert on competition, Prof. Michael E. Porter, points out, “Competitive strategy is about being different. It means deliberately choosing a different set of activities to deliver a unique mix of value” (Porter, 1996, 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 favour of a profit-centred 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’ll 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 recognise, 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 the book 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 behaviour.

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, so 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, we see that by failing to recognize the world-centric, 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 nation-centric level of civic awareness and its inadequacy, consequently, to address today's global problems.

Destructive International Competition: Prime Threat; Prime Opportunity

We can now better see, I hope, that destructive international competition to a very significant extent *determines* (i.e. constrains or guides) the behaviour of individual 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 surprise us 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 we are suggesting, then, represents the crucial deeper reality—the deeper view of the available stimuli—those at a Teal or lower level of civic consciousness do not see.

Race to the Bottom and Regulatory Chill

Political economists will know that the above-described theory of destructive international competition is similar, but not identical, to what is more commonly known as “race to the bottom” theory (Daly, 1993). Race to the bottom suggests a progressive, competitive *down-*levelling 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 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” (Blair, 2008, 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 globalisation, 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 EU 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 off-setting factors in its mix; factors such as the attractiveness of its large, rich and educationally advanced market. For developing nations without such off-setting 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 towards 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 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." (Blair, 2008, p. 7).

In conclusion, we could say that destructive international competition encompasses *both* regulatory chill *and* race-to-the-bottom theories, 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 world-centrally.

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 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.” (Stewart, 2000, 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 wipe-out 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 substantially 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. Only that our emphasis should now be on achieving an appropriate form of binding, people-centred, 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, we saw, severely restricted. In today’s global economy, only those policies which 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. That’s 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 may 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 macro-economic 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, we citizens no longer have any effective means of redress—a perilous situation indeed.

Design Criteria for a Turquoise, world-centric form of 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 world-centric 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* nation-centric, and cannot therefore be reconciled with world-centric civic action.⁸ Political parties are simply too embedded in, too pathologically fused with, the nation-centric system they would seek to transform; something of an inherent contradiction.

Equally, however, the non-governmental route pursued by Green and Teal approaches fares no better. For governments' paramount need to maintain their national competitiveness dictates, as we saw, that regardless of how well NGOs may campaign, and however loudly they may protest, their demands can only continue to go largely unmet. And 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 world-centric form of civic action, then, would have to be embodied in an unprecedented type of hybrid organization; a *transformative* organization that was 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 which avoided 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 world-centric civic consciousness—practical answers may be more readily available than we might at first think.

The Nation-state: From Thanatos to Eros

What we have described brings us to the unavoidable 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 Fig. 4, we re-trace 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 (New Unity), or whether it regresses into chaos. As Wilber 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” (Wilber, 2000, p. 192).

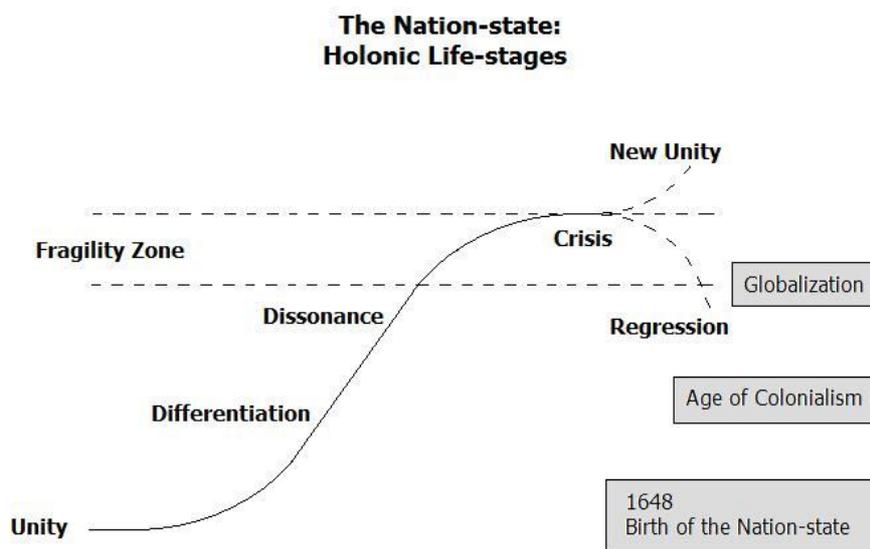


Figure 4

We must move, then, to a higher, world-centric civic consciousness and a form of civic action capable of achieving global governance.

Global Cooperative Governance: Denial in the Face of Necessity

But despite the on-coming crisis, few of us choose to even consider or investigate global governance, the integral community included. One reason is because Green and Teal civic worldviews, being nation-centric, still 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 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 and absolute need for binding global governance; it is immediately cast aside and denied. Just because the mountain to be climbed seems so daunting, we pretend to ourselves it doesn’t need climbing at all; we pretend, even, that it doesn’t exist.

An example of this was subtly demonstrated in the UK news digest, *The Week*. One of its articles covered protests which took place in the UK 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 UK 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 UK 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, 25th 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 waking up to 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 has, that “Anything short of that noospheric accord *will continue to destroy the biosphere*” [his emphasis] (Wilber, 2000, p. 541), we switch off. Despite the evidence that only global governance can suffice, people—including those at altitude Green or Teal—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 accepted 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 that I do not mean some anarchic, taking to the streets. Rather, an unprecedented entity 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 do not wish to take. 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 world-centric 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 world-centric awareness; and perceiving global governance as necessary to solve it, requires world-centric *civic* awareness.

² Elsewhere in my writing, I have hitherto called this “the human social holarchy”.

³ Thus, as Wilber 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”. (Wilber, 2000, p. 72-3).

⁴ Chapter VII of the UN Charter provides for the possibility of mandatory resolutions, sanctions and the authorisation 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 sections headed *Conscious Capitalism* and *Commons Trusts* are taken, with kind permission, from my review of the book published in *Integral Leadership Review*, Vol. X, No.2, March, 2010.

⁷ *Voter Turnout Since 1945 – A Global Report*, available from 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” de-regulation 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 Fulfilment, Dissonance, Insight/Opening, Fulfilment at new level, as explained in *A Theory of Everything* by Ken Wilber, (2001) Gateway (Gill & Macmillan), p. 35. For more on this, see Bunzl (2009a) in the Reference section. The S-curve is derived, with grateful acknowledgement, from *After the Clockwork Universe* by Sally Goerner (1999), Edinburgh, UK, Floris Books.

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