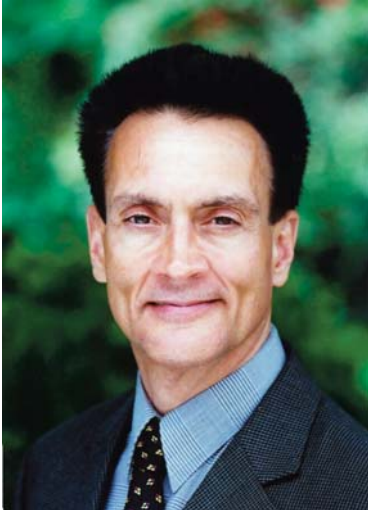


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The Commons and Integral Capital

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Private-Public Monoculture

The global economic crash is very big news. But what the media headlines and reports do not mention is how deeply this crisis is rooted in our history. During the past several centuries, businesses and government have become enmeshed in a single system. State capitalism now exists in virtually every sovereign nation. These *Market States* distribute the benefits of a decent quality of life, rule of law and political security to their people — a great advance on pre-modern economies where most land and resources were held in common under fragile political conditions. Yet it is increasingly clear that, as a model for social transformation, the Market State rests on crumbling foundations. Our traditional commons still have much to teach us.

The chronic instability of the Market State results from the conflict of two opposing ideas: that businesses should be free to maximize their short-term private interests, while government should maximize the long-term interests of the public. During prosperous and peaceful times this disaccord is viewed favorably. The tension between these antipodal positions — of

expanding freedom of choice while ensuring that one person's freedom matters equally as much as that of the next person — is thought to produce a middle way and thus provide the basis for dynamic social change. Yet our fixation with regulating economic growth — either by redistributing value upwards to the wealthy in the name of private interests, or downwards toward the poor in the name of the public interest — pits freedom against equality. These discrepancies in ideology and class come into focus particularly during times of economic malaise and political confusion, bringing our actual 'social progress' into question.

For generations now, humanity's shared resources have been under assault from global market forces, regional and national policy development, and inadequate legal recognition of common property rights. The enclosure and appropriation of these resources have resulted in the systematic destruction of earth's living systems and people's own regenerative capacities for life and wealth. We are all aware of the damage caused by relentless consumption, the accumulation of unused surpluses and mountains of waste, and the inequitable distribution of material costs and benefits. It is not just that poverty, social neglect, the unsustainable removal of natural resources and climate change are not being effectively addressed — they are in fact precipitated by the overreaching determinism of state capitalism.

In maximizing its own capital growth, the Market State (represented by both the Upper Right and Lower Right quadrants in Figure 1) is increasingly unable to pay back what it has been borrowing from the poor, from natural resources and from future generations. The suppressed assets of the global commons are given zero value and then collateralized through a debt-based

money supply which uses interest rates to force consumption and growth, thereby generating private wealth. But this build-up of indebted assets on the surplus side of planetary capital — gradually inflating through a series of booms and busts over the past few hundred years and then surging in recent decades — has generated the massive global economic bubble which now has burst. This is the story the media cannot report because its underlying facts are not fully comprehended or conceded. We simply have no context now for understanding this collapse. That is because our popular narrative of history and social change — individual freedom vs. equality — has not caught up with the sobering news that real economic growth and social progress are deeply constrained by the *division of the commons*, prohibiting our realization of the true reserve value in human civilization.

The Case for Dialectical Transformation

The commons are areas of shared space or mutual interest and worth that the private and public sectors usually do not include on their balance sheets (either because the values are too difficult to monetize or because the Market State chooses not to declare their actual worth). These commons involve various types of relationships, meaning and wealth that link us to the things we share and need to live. They can be local, state, interstate, regional or global in scope. Commons capital (Lower Left quadrant) includes our *purchasing power, indigenous wisdom and traditions, social development, community ties, labor relations, women's and children's freedom, religious and ethnic traditions and values, racial and minority uniqueness, language, intellectual property, communication flows, cultural freedom, musical, artistic and literary expression, the collective capacity to issue money, the preservation of ecological resources such as the seas, fisheries, land,*

forests, water and air, and the protection of genetic life forms and species. Some of these forms of commons capital are replenishable and some are not. Yet all are part of a much larger developmental process of shared global values that has only begun to be understood. Of course, the commons and their wealth have been here all along, having been expropriated by private and public interests over many centuries, which has left them undervalued, relatively unrecognized and unnamed (or misnamed). But these excluded, dissociated commons, which have been taken for granted and ignored as a kind of irrelevant annex to the Market State, are now being rediscovered by many activists as an essential structural component of historical and social change.

Distinguishing a *commons sector* from the *public and private sectors* implies a dynamic power that transcends the polarized interests of the Market State. In this emerging interpretation of the Hegelian dialectic of nature and history, the clashing values between private and public interests, which are always under stress, have reached a breaking point. From within the Market State itself, this crisis is viewed as a *cyclical failure* and subject to countercyclical course corrections such as government intervention to stimulate or regulate the economy. In dialectical terms, the production and ownership of resource capital by private businesses (*thesis*) are contradicted by the management and appropriation of resource capital by public government (*antithesis*).

In spite of their seemingly irreconcilable goals, business and government together still constitute a monoculture which relies on the division of the commons and its resources to generate wealth and drive progress. Rather than preserve the differential values of the commons, however, the profit-maximizing Market State standardizes all values through interest rates, market prices, cost-benefit analyses, state rules and political ideology. Because this one-dimensional accounting structure does not reflect the actual wealth of people and their commons capital (including the real value of air, water, species, social relations, ideas, rights, currency, arts and inventions), it is capable only of marginal adjustments

and cannot transform itself from within. This generates a new contradiction: the recognition that the Market State is in *systemic failure* — not merely a downturn in a boom-bust cycle — and can only be addressed through the *mobilization of a viable third sector for the mutual responsibility and governance of the commons and the realization of a new kind of capital*. The rejection of the static monism of the Market State now gives rise to the shared management, allocation and preservation of common wealth by those who live near, care for, depend on, use or express, or have traditional relationships with these vital resources. This new source of value is commons capital (*synthesis*).

An historic adjustment has thus begun. Each of us faces a pivotal decision. When the *carrying capacity* of a particular commons is at risk and no longer supports the achievement of human needs and well-being through the availability of renewable or non-renewable resources — particularly when a resource is jeopardized through its overuse or mismanagement — we have both a moral and empirical obligation to reorganize the way our commons value is managed. Growing numbers of us are now reclaiming our individual and collective sovereignty from the Market State and returning to the transparent stewardship of commons institutions to manage and protect the unrealized value of these resources. Many believe that by recovering our mutually shared capacities, meanings and responsibilities for the commons we can transform state capitalism and its disastrous monetary cycles, unleashing the potentials and long-term interests of global society in sustaining life and wealth. Our hope is that the reintegration of the commons with the public and private sectors will include the proven functions and beneficial structures of the Market State yet go beyond their exclusionary limitations, particularly the creation of scarcity through the exploitation of our mental, cultural, social and natural capital. This is the dialectical vision of the commons.

Is the Commons a 'Third Way'?

Promising as it sounds, there is a pitfall in viewing the triangulation of private, public

and commons capital as a process of historical change. The definition of the collective commons *vis a vis* the private and public sectors has no direct roots in interior personal consciousness (UL quadrant, Figure 1) and does little to reverse the unremitting conditions of human depersonalization and disempowerment. What is missing or taken for granted in this dialectical formulation is the *vital flow of personal capital* — *pure cognition, knowledge, perception, judgment, moral sensibility and responsibility* — of the individuals who are managing their commons capital in the present moment. What history shows is that strategic mastery of the dialectic, driven by destructive forms of production and consumption, results in the disengagement and devaluation of conscious wealth, stripping people of their rights, effectively displacing their inner experience and marginalizing their mental capacities as human beings.

Declaring the commons as an autonomous 'third way' does not ground the commons in human consciousness, or in one's choice of behavior or moral responsibility. It does not by itself end our abiding romance with privatization, ownership of resources, property rights and political boundaries, nor prevent the forces of value-free dialectical reasoning from continuing to exploit our mental, cultural, social and natural capital.

When human beings are conditioned to view history and social progress as a 'pendulum swing' between the poles of freedom-equality, private-public, boom-bust, deregulation-regulation, conservative-liberal, rich-poor and developed-underdeveloped, we scarcely recognize the meaning or existence of the commons. Commons resources and the people who depend on them are treated as lifeless, contingent property embedded in the externalized economic system. Indeed, most of us have become unconscious of the extent to which the signifiers of the Market State — the ubiquitous terms of market prices, interest rates, state rules and ideology — exhaustively program our everyday meaning. Both the dispossessed individual and the disenchanted commons have normative reality only by virtue of being integrated into this

Modern / Post-Modern Capital

Individual

Personal Capital

(Ontogenetic Development)
(Bio-physical Sustenance / Personal Health)
(Sensory Wants / Individual Demand)
(Knowledge & Innovation / Initiative & Risk)
(Saving / Civic Participation)
(Friendship / Mating / Parenting)
(Working & Wage Earning)
(Consuming)
(Spending)

Private Capital

Unitary Accounting
Mass Productive Output
Inflation or Deflation of Asset Value
Profit & Capital Accumulation / Banking
Individual / Corporate Share
Advertising
Product or Service
Property Right / Contractual Management
Price

Interior

(Dissociation of Purchasing Power)
(Social Poverty / Community Fragmentation)
(Commodification of Labor)
(Repression of Women, Children & Youth)
(Religious, Racial & Minority Oppression)
(Linguistic, Intellectual & Communications Suppression)
(Cultural Repression / Collective Debt)
(Ecological Destruction)
(Genetic Monopolization)
Commons Capital

Exterior

Basic Goods & Services
Agriculture, Land & Housing
Employment
Social Health & Welfare
Industry / Taxes, Civil Service, Law & Security
Education, Technology & Information
Credit & Liquidity / Interest Rates
Natural Resources / Energy
Mass Population
Public Capital

Collective

figure 1

Figure 1 is derived from the AQAL (All Quadrants - All Lines) Integral theory advanced by Ken Wilbur in Sex, Ecology and Spirituality and other publications. Figure 1 is NOT an Integral map, since the stages of the Upper Right and Lower Right quadrants are highly differentiated, while the items in the Upper Left and Lower Left quadrants are repressed or malformed stages (as indicated by parentheses) in the actualization of personal and commons capital. The Market State uses many forms of dissociation to deny the autonomy of personal capital and sustain the division of commons capital. These include the division of labor, resource extraction, rent, surplus accumulation, issuance of currency, interest rates, debt, commodification, reductionism, disinformation, deterritorialization, subsistence, slavery, colonialism, state terrorism, oppression, violence and war.

homogeneously objectified network of utilitarian language and practice. Perceiving ourselves as limited beings, disconnected, isolated and subject to forces beyond our control, we have no basis on which to defend our shared spaces, purposes and values. That is why organizing a third sector on the commons without also including the essential capital of human consciousness — and thus the ability to make responsible choices and undertake deliberate action for our survival and well-being in conscious freedom — can only perpetuate the amoralistic determinism of the Market State, its culture of denial, and our widening sense of desolation and loss over the disappearance of the commons.

Private - Personal Distinctions

With reference to Figure 1, the distinction between *public capital* (of government providing basic public goods and services, infrastructure and security) and *commons capital* (expressed here as developmental stages in the realization of people's collective values and shared interior resources) is fairly straightforward. But the differences between *private and personal capital* need clarification, particularly in three areas. First, why should the term 'private' represent the outer material wealth and not the inner conscious wealth of an individual? The UR quadrant depicting private capital does not refer to a class or subclass of people, or to their individual consciousness, but to the outward behaviors that create or accumulate material wealth (whether through production or investment). Clearly, personal subjective awareness is distinct from private objective practice even though the same person may be engaged in both the inner conscious calculation and the outer activity of producing or amassing material wealth. *Personal capital refers to the timeless interior wealth of individual presence and meaning* — the energies of spontaneity, selflessness, truth, sincerity, responsibility, creativity, intentionality and initiative. *Private capital refers to the wealth that is generated in linear time through external behaviors, conditions and designs* — not to the groups or minds that may be consciously engaged in those activities.

The second consideration is that although many of us think of private capital as an

expression of multiplicity — an expansive free market, big corporations, mass production and economies of scale — *private capital is actually characterized by its reductionist individuality* (UR quadrant, Figure 1). Every supply chain which transforms the resources, raw materials and components of suppliers and producers into products for the market has the uniform goal of efficiency at the lowest cost. Consumer goods and services are specifically priced — and even when bundled together, every buy and every sell is a unique transaction. Mass-produced goods are made one at a time and advertising is ultimately targeted to one person at a time. Business managers are focused primarily upon a specific goal — profit — through the product or service they sell. The shareholder is focused mainly on a sole statistic — the share price of the corporation — in pursuit of the individual goal of maximizing returns. Every business is a single unit in the marketplace and corporations are even provided exclusive legal privileges under the singular abstraction of 'corporate personhood' with limited liability protections and rights. Every business asset is individual and subject to inflation or deflation of value. Accounting is also a standardized composite of individual entries. The point is that although private capital is often perceived as a sprawling collectivity of chains of cause and effect, the only way the private market is able to bring all of these resources, special interests and people into a unitary cohesion is through its singular material focus on the creation of new wealth — which is a highly particularized activity.

Thirdly, the meaning of personal capital (UL quadrant, Figure 1) has become so thoroughly blurred that it needs serious reexamination. Theories of scientific rationality and evolutionary psychology — which explain away the meaning and motives of our conscious selves as a collection of neurons — are often used to justify why people should serve the utility of the marketplace and adopt the 'ethics' of consumer culture out of natural necessity. To this end, orthodox economics assumes that every individual is comprised of appetites that are seeking to be satisfied. It

also maintains that each person believes that the marketplace has the capacity to satisfy those appetites. Yet this *self-interest and faith in pursuit of maximum individual satisfaction are not necessarily generated from within personal consciousness*, but are largely behavioral assumptions or expectations projected upon individuals. 'Individual demand' does not exist inwardly as part of our personal capital — it is rather an exterior market explanation of the interior drives of need and want as they are outwardly registered in the marketplace. This so-called demand is objectified by setting the limited means of private capital and production against the potentially unlimited desires and consumption of human beings, virtually ignoring existential human need, and focusing instead on the manufacture of human dissatisfactions and wants and the products and services to fulfill them. This emphasis on the supply-side of the economic equation thus reduces human beings to the lowest common denominators of personal value — sensory indulgence, pleasure and happiness. For most of us, spending, consuming, working, receiving an income, raising a family, saving, learning, developing skills, expressing needs, acting on wants, maintaining personal health, pursuing self-development and claiming one's rights are mindless behaviors as much as they are conscious identities, values or motivations. All of these levels of economic life involve *conscious wealth* that is distinct from a person's outward behavior, but is largely unrealized or expressed in the light of momentary present experience — and, as many individuals have learned, may not lead to a better quality of life or the fulfillment of one's highest potentials and well-being.

The Division of Commons

Unsettling as this is, the realm of personal capital is not the most repressed area. The domain that has been tragically neglected and undifferentiated is that of our commons capital (LL quadrant, Figure 1) — the mass realm of interior resources, meanings and values that remain lost or obscured in the shadows of modern territoriality, insularity and taboo. Humanity has only begun to recognize the collective

evolutionary forms of its sovereign identity with the global commons. While many important dimensions of these commons are familiar topics in civil society, such as social and environmental justice and indigenous peoples' rights, *they have yet to be identified as actual commons issues or linked together as developmental stages establishing our collective meaning and value as a global civilization.* Despite the cornucopia of worthy ideals which spring from the interior depths of our mental, cultural, social and natural commons, civil society stakeholders who pursue their work directly through the objectified rules and dialectical institutions of the Market State often end up strengthening its technocratic power without creating greater equality for the broader population or realizing greater rights and values for the commons as a whole. Civil society has clearly identified the principles of resource extraction and division of labor behind the aggregation of private and public wealth, but we have yet to recognize that these are merely subsets in the greater *division of commons*, the phenomenon observed by Karl Polanyi in *The Great Transformation*. This is the historical process through which we have surrendered not only our traditional properties, material resources and labor power, but also our interior identities, shared meanings and values to the instrumental order of the modern Market State. By contrast, Figure 2 suggests how the realization of personal and commons value (Left quadrants) can be embedded within the Market State (Right quadrants) as part of a greater planetary society in which *all modes of wealth — personal, commons, private and public — are fully engaged in the service of humanity.* This is the vision of a world civilization living in harmony and cooperation through the benefit of *integral capital*, perhaps later in this century.

In the meantime, though, the integration of the commons with the private and public spheres will invite opposition and resistance, and to this extent, commoners are indeed historic agents of change. But what is non-dialectical about the commons is that in rising up, our independent groups do not seek to deny the importance of the marketplace or take over the power of the

state. The revolt of the commons is rather an insurgency of timeless streaming energy — of honesty, courage and imagination, of curiosity, innovation and incentive, of new capacities, inspiration and purpose. This means standing present and acknowledging the *existence value* of common property and resources through our inter-relational experience with one another, our local language and meanings, our shared group initiatives, knowledge and rituals, and our common concern for future generations and the intricate web of relationships of all of life. Under the skies, by the river, on the ground, in the city, at home, through exchange with friends or strangers we honor the dignity and worth in each other, relieve human suffering, collaborate, regenerate the resources that sustain our lives, celebrate and engage the wonders of the living world. There we can still find what is true. There, on the commons, we can still find what is good, where value is still a matter of human dignity and freedom, of love and understanding, of peace and joy.

Caring for the Present Moment

Responsibility for the protection, allocation and regulation of our commons involves experimenting with new approaches to participatory management. It means evolving new covenants and institutions to negotiate the uses of the commons among all stakeholders and effective ways of holding them accountable. It means creating groups, associations and movements in which the mutual interests of all citizens are directly represented in the preservation of collective wealth — for example, through *commons trusts* for carbon pollution, the use of outer space, the seas, the Arctic, ecosystems, electromagnetic spectrum, and cross-border trade and financial flows.

It means addressing issues like: how can we protect the gene pool of human and non-human life which has become so commercialized? Why are corporations and governments permitted to take natural resources at virtually no cost? Why are human beings shepherded into political boundaries that do not match the capacity of local resources to support their livelihoods? Why are intellectual properties sequestered and communication and information

flows impeded? Why are cultural resources exploited and denigrated, both in indigenous and modern communities? Why are shared human values disregarded? Why is money — an expression of cultural value that entails the right of people to create their own forms of exchange — issued by governments and controlled by private banks? Why couldn't we create renewable currencies using resource replenishment rates instead of interest rates? How can our mental, social, cultural and ecological capital be turned into self-funding mechanisms to reconstitute our depleted commons and generate tangible dividends for the individuals who use or need these resources or suffer the effects of their displacement?

Putting constituent power and accountability back into the hands of people and recovering our own morality, responsibility and presence is the essence of human sovereignty and democratic freedom—and the radical hope of the commons. Through presence and encounter, recognizing ourselves in each other, we experience how deeply we share our physical resources, our bodies, minds, lives and cultures. Group understanding and care for the present moment creates new expanses and clearings where Being can arise, allowing us to realize the implicit meaning of conscious wealth.

In turn, our co-governance of these commons, grounded in conscious liberty and self-determination, will provide a powerfully effective counterweight to the Market State and lead to the adoption of integral capital both within nations and through the emerging transborder networks of planetary civilization. Reframing the meaning of our capital wealth will thus create new incentives to end poverty, restore the ecology and generate sustainable growth, transforming the economic and political institutions of the Market State for ourselves and for generations to come.

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Integral Capital

Individual

Personal Capital

Sovereign Being
Human Birthrights
Ontogenetic Development
Bio-Physical Sustenance / Personal Health
Sincerity of Need / Generosity in Giving
Knowing & Creativity / Initiative & Capacity for Risk
Intentionality in Saving / Civic Conscience
Integrity in Friendship, Mating & Parenting
Meaning in Work / Wage Self-Identity
Mindfulness in Consumption
Self-Reflection in Spending

Private Capital

Global Material Wealth
Allocation per Carrying Capacity
Holistic Accounting
Mass Productive Output
Equilibrium of Asset Value
Profit & Capital Accumulation / Banking
Individual / Corporate Share
Advertising
Product or Service
Property Right / Contractual Management
Price

Interior

Exterior

Equity in Purchasing Power
Social Development & Community Trust
Labor Reciprocity
Equality of Women, Youth & Children
Religious, Racial & Minority Cooperation
Linguistic, Intellectual & Communications Freedom
Open Cultural Exchange / Currency Renewability
Ecological Stewardship
Phylogenetic Preservation
Mutual Responsibility through Commons Trusts
Shared Values of Global Commonwealth

Basic Goods & Services
Agriculture, Land & Housing
Employment
Social Health & Welfare
Industry / Civil Service, Law & Security
Education, Technology & Information
Credit & Liquidity / Replenishment Rate
Natural Resources / Energy
Mass Population
UN Global Economic Council
Cosmopolitan Democracy

Commons Capital

Public Capital

Collective

figure 2

Figure 2 is also adapted from Wilbur's AQAL theory. It suggests historical and current parallels between the development of political economy and the development of individual and collective conscious value. It also anticipates new areas of realization, growth and organization that will result from a transformation of the personal motivations, drives and meaning involved in people's shared management of their commons, which in turn will transform political economy, both nationally and globally.