

# Escaping the Failures of Capitalism

By T.Collins Logan

All around the world, something long overdue has been gaining momentum: a deepening sense that our current form of feudalistic state capitalism is frighteningly destructive, and that we urgently need to move beyond it. This awareness has been present since the onset of industrialized society, mainly among marginalized and exploited communities, but also among those who have taken time to appreciate the historic narrative of those oppressed populations. Unfortunately, until fairly recently, the rapid enrichment of a middle class in the industrialized world, and the effective distancing of abuse and impoverishment onto developing countries, has successfully insulated even the well-educated from consequences of commercialist corporationism. But with increasingly fluid global trade – and the equally fluid explosion of Internet information and democratization of personal digital communication – the cultural segregation of haves and have-nots has eroded, incontrovertibly exposing the ugly underbelly of the profit motive. For the first time in capitalism's history, we can learn about government corruption, cronyism, industrial accidents, corporate malfeasance and mismanagement, market failures, product hazards, callous acts of the upper class, overreach of our security apparatus, abuses of police and so much more within mere moments of an uploaded news article, a whistleblower leak, a research paper or a cell phone video. The reflexive ideological spin from all points of the spectrum may still be endless, but cat is already out of the bag.

A predictable state capitalist response has been Internet filtration and access control in the more overtly oppressive regimes, which are duly frightened by the ubiquity of truth this new environment provides. However, the same reflex is also echoed by attempts to undermine net neutrality and maintain the digital class divide in ostensibly freer societies. In the midst of these attempted controls, another equally predictable consequence has been the breadth and intensity of collective pushback, as evidenced in the Occupy Movement, leaving little doubt that large swaths of the global population have grasped the fundamental inequity and unsustainability of the status quo. However, a legitimate criticism of much of this pushback has been that, although its objections may be cogent, concrete solutions have been less forthcoming. So what can be done? For those who remain unconvinced of the need for change, I'll cover some of the central concerns in just a bit. But our main focus in this essay will be to answer the question: "What is the best way to escape the failures of capitalism, and how do we begin?"

## First, we need a roadmap.

There are countless constructive ideas out there, many of which have been tested in the real world, and of those tested, some have demonstrated enough scalability and endurance to be considered as viable alternatives. Examples are endless but a few include Transition Towns, P2P, Mondragon Corporation, Open Source/Knowledge/Access, maker culture, Swiss healthcare and direct democracy, Permaculture, and Canadian credit unions. All of these are helpful innovations, and many of them can be fit together to create a complete picture, a new way of producing things, exchanging value, governing society, enacting environmentally sound agriculture and so on. However, there is as yet no single, unified vision that integrates these proposals and ideas into a harmonized whole that can effectively erase the need for the state capitalist system as it exists today – or that creates a clear roadmap of how arrive at that harmonized whole from where we are now.

To that end, I have proposed what I call a “Level 7” political economy in my book *Political Economy and the Unitive Principle*. As a quick overview of the concepts in that book, let’s look at some of the central features of Level 7, beginning with its guiding principles, design criteria for a new system, and a few of its primary metrics.

First some guiding principles. These are intended to support assumptions about how the most healing and constructive solution can be created – assumptions derived from a long tradition of prosocial moral and political philosophies, the importance of empathy and skillful compassion in all social relations, and the inevitable impact of moral advancement on attitudes about property ownership, natural ecosystems, systems of production, styles of governance, and types of democratic participation. They are summarized as follows:

- A philosophy of government that more fluidly and directly expresses democratic will, and does so equally, inclusive of all ideological orientations and special interests, without disproportionate influence through concentrations of material wealth or social capital.
- An economic system that inherently enables the most equitable, egalitarian distribution of opportunity, material wealth and social capital, and provides a level playing field for all potential and existing producers of goods and services. This system sustains itself in a stable, high quality steady state - or more probably in predictable cycles of ebb and flow that are dynamic but not extreme - rather than relying on constant growth.
- An education system that supports all other systems with a diversely informed populace trained in compassion, critical thought, alternative viewpoints and broad-spectrum dialogue; that is, a populace whose literacy, expertise, proficiency and interests can help manage economies and governments at all levels from a more advanced moral orientation.

- A mediasphere that offers a neutral space for the emergence of divergent perspectives, while at the same time providing both democratically controlled feedback mechanisms for accuracy and fairness, and unlimited access to independent evaluative data on all sources of information.
- An industrial production system that not only strives toward an equitable distribution of profits and decision-making within each organization, but also incorporates social, political and ecological externalities into its strategic and tactical metrics and decisions, for the greatest benefit to all. For example, factors like biological diversity, environmental sustainability, community empowerment, democratic feedback mechanisms, cultural diversity, and the health and well-being of workers and consumers would all be taken into account.
- An energy production system that relies on highly distributed, scalable, renewable resources whose capacities in a steady-state or cyclical non-growth economy inherently exceed demand as both conservation and efficiencies increase over time.
- A monetary system that does not, by its very nature, create inflationary pressures, perpetual debt-slavery, or concentration of wealth in private banks, but instead encourages investment opportunities for all, while remaining under public, democratic control.
- In all of these contexts, initial policies and rigorous metrics would strive to maintain a continuous Pareto efficiency, as framed by the intention that public goods eventually overtake most arenas of private profit.

Where these guiding principles lead us should have, by design, tremendous variability and flexibility in implementation, but they can nevertheless provide us with a few instrumental assumptions regarding our roadmap's milestones:

- The first stage of transition demands a carefully balanced, mixed economy that retains necessary centralized standards, systems and supportive structures, but shifts the implementation and management of those standards, systems and structures away from centralized administration and toward highly distributed self-governance. Thus, although the most complex building blocks of this political economy are still organized and integrated on a large scale, they would be tactically managed on a smaller, distributed scale. For example, centralized infrastructure and essential services (i.e. the most foundational and universal processes, production, services and institutions of the new political economy) would provide a "Universal Social Backbone," which in turn supports a host of spontaneous, decentralized, rhizomatic and community-centric elements that thrive under distributed management.

- Exchange values would be calculated on a proposed “holistic value,” which includes multiple dimensions of import, many of which are now often considered mainly in the abstract – or as bothersome externalities. Holistic value is an attempt at a more comprehensive valuation, and so includes a host of metrics including, but not limited to, perceived and intersubjective use value, effective nourishment value, and potential “perverse utility” – that is, a negative value based on possibilities of abuse or harm. The ongoing impact of goods and services on environmental, individual and social thriving would be measured in as many dimensions as possible, then fluidly and transparently promoted to the electorate, so that exchange values can be revised to enable the greatest good for the greatest number. In this way, informed direct democracy would override the artificially engineered tensions of demand and supply.
- While property of all kinds would increasingly fall under a “res communes” property designation, other designations (public domain, private, communal, etc.) would still exist on a scale commensurate to the workers, stakeholders and beneficiaries involved. In other words, we would create a kind of transitional, hybrid form of property ownership, where everyone who has a stake in the use, profits, privileges, impacts or benefits of any property – whether that property is a natural resource or the result of service and production activities – would have a say in how that property was used and managed, and how its benefits are distributed. Again this means that residents, consumers, workers and government officials are all part of the mix; what is held in common for the benefit of all is administered (again at a community level, if possible) for the benefit of all by those whom it benefits – with a clear appreciation of externalities and holistic value as part of this mix. While this hybrid ownership schema initially might favor those who appear to have a greater stake in certain property, its eventual aim would be to shift into purely “common” ownership where such emphasis would no longer have priority.
- Along the lines of the hybrid property ownership feature, but also to address the rule of law and other essential civic institutions, direct democracy and direct civic involvement at the national, regional and community levels would at first augment, then increasingly replace the current representative abstractions of governance, banking, commerce and institutional accountability on every scale – from the local level to the global.

As we then refine planning, increasing granularity from the thirty-thousand-foot level to concrete action items, we need to propose specific solutions that are tailored to each unique cultural, demographic and economic environment around the globe. Thus the interdependent design of a post-capitalist system will be complex and multifaceted, but below are a few of the more generic considerations for just one such implementation, in this case the U.S.A. These proposals have also been borrowed from *Political Economy and the Unitive Principle*, and although the concepts and language are more thoroughly defined in

that book, I have rephrased things here to provide insight into how each of these proposed components are formulated.

1. To whatever degree possible, quid pro quo political connections between industry, finance, a more direct democratic implementation of government, the mediasphere, the education system, and the health-and-welfare system must be severed, then insulated from each other as rigorously as possible. These are of course interdependent structures, but separation could be maintained through independent funding, governance processes and decision-making cycles, with differing degrees of direct democratic involvement – or insertion of the democratic process at different junctures in the governance process, so as to counterbalance short-lived collective impulses. What we are aiming for here is a pragmatic, clearly boundarized functional and political separation. The final purveyor of this separation is of course the general populace, but that democratic will would be concentrated and normalized through different formulas and durations of leadership - as well as staggered referendum cycles and legal restrictions on revolving door leadership deployment across these divisions.
2. Although all government would still consist of executive, legislative and judicial branches, the two-party system would of necessity be abolished. Instead, the legislative branch would be restructured to reflect either a parliamentary system, or some other effective means of non-polarizing proportional representation. In addition, more frequent direct national referendums would guide public policy at the national level, so that procedural sabotage of democracy (such as the current "majority of the majority" rule in the House of Representatives) could be overridden. Likewise, direct votes at each level of government, all the way down to local, would inform policy and practice at those levels. A certain percentage of government representatives could also be chosen at each level of government through a service lottery, much as jury duty selections occur today, to serve for a limited time as part of decision making bodies (citizen commissions, city councils, state legislatures, etc.). And a certain percentage of representatives would be selected through a multi-party election process without primaries, to serve for longer terms than those selected via lottery, but with a limit on the number of terms they could serve. It should be understood and appreciated that highly advanced societies will require highly specialized skill sets for these elected officials, and that many independent schools of technocratic proficiency will inevitably arise to meet this need. The key will be to ensure that all such specialized viewpoints are adequately represented, while concurrently balanced with citizen input and community-based authority.
3. Labor would be separated into two distinct categories that are organized and managed in different ways. The first category would be "infrastructure and essential services" (i.e. the Universal Social Backbone). These are the fundamental products, institutions and services necessary for any sort of complex society to function at the most basic levels, and which have already tended to be socialized in most mixed-economies. Roads, bridges, water, electricity and communication are the first tier of

this category, followed by more abstracted products and services that build on those foundations, but are still perceived as universal expectations by the general public. This second tier is comprised of the systems and institutions that provide the backbone of civil society. For example, public transportation, public healthcare, public education, public safety services, social security, and so on. As expectations differ from one zeitgeist to the next, so would the scope of inclusion in these tiers. I happen to think basic banking and insurance services, basic nutrition, basic housing, mail delivery, fundamental scientific research, worker retraining, employment placement services, and unemployment benefits also fall under "infrastructure and essential services." One common thread of these public domain industries, however, is that they facilitate trade for the second category of labor. This is a crucial point: without centrally coordinated infrastructure and essential services, there really is no way to enable a reliable (or equitable) exchange economy of any kind.

To whatever degree possible, *all of this should be organized and tactically managed at the community level*, with centralized standardization and support, subject to direct democratic control. Instead of centrally run state institutions or corporations, there would be **networked, non-profit, worker-owned cooperatives** that are centrally regulated but monitored, but administered with a substantial degree of autonomy at the community level. It might also be interesting for different regions to compete with each other for customer satisfaction, and be rewarded in some way for their success. If the service or product being delivered provides the most fundamental level of infrastructure or essential services, there wouldn't be competition for customers between the cooperatives, but the cooperatives would be limited in size (by service area, etc.), and subject to public input and scrutiny to ensure an adequate level of service delivery. If the service or product is not part of infrastructure or essential services, then the non-profit cooperatives could compete with each other for the same customers across different regions. So although there is a strong element of central planning here, the actual control and execution is highly segmented and distributed, both because of the divisions of government already alluded to, and the emphasis on community-level organization.

There should be some mechanism to ensure the Universal Social Backbone doesn't somehow undermine individual contribution to society by inoculating the least morally developed against survival or well-being concerns. That is, there would be some form of citizen reciprocation for this foundation, and consequences for a lack of reciprocation. So, for instance, everyone who receives benefits could participate in these very same programs as unpaid volunteers for short but regular periods of time, with consistent expectations of performance. If someone chooses not to volunteer, or willfully demonstrates exceedingly poor performance, their access to some or all of these services (or perhaps certain qualities of service) could be restricted.

4. The second category of labor is for production of goods and services that add value to society above and beyond essential services. There would be several tiers to this

category. At the top would be certain major industries, especially those that a) have essentially become closed to rapid or major innovation, b) are de facto market monopolies, or c) otherwise dictate economies of scale with highly centralized controls. These would become worker-owned cooperatives subject to governmental oversight, with the level of government responsible for oversight always larger than the size and reach of the business itself. These would be much like the first category of labor, but in this case for-profit. There is no reason why this tier couldn't compete with cooperatives in the first category, wherever that makes sense. Again, the scope of this category will change from one culture to the next, and from one generation to the next.

In the second tier we find medium-to-large businesses, once again worker-owned cooperatives, which would compete with each other for customers. Communities in which either of these two top-tier businesses are located would have the ability to a) reject proposals to start a business in a given location, b) introduce progressive penalties on a misbehaving or undesirable business in their community, or c) rescind a business's privilege to operate in their community altogether for cause. All of this would be accomplished through a direct referendum process, with the intent that all such businesses work closely with the community to address that community's preferences and concerns. The third tier would be sole proprietorships or very small businesses (perhaps five employees or less?), which is the only tier where a business entity could be privately owned and managed, and thereby be insulated from community controls. This three-tier system - or an equivalent approach - is an absolute necessity, in my view, since currently such huge concentrations of wealth and influence in the private sector has demonstrated itself to be the greatest threat to a functional democracy, the most pernicious abuser and exploiter of workers and the environment, and the most disruptive to our collective moral maturation process. In other words, these huge privatized industries are simply too powerful to be permitted to exist outside of the democratic process as they do today.

5. The ratio between the salary of the highest paid individuals in a given field and that of the lowest paid individuals in the same field - as well as what the highest and lowest wages would be, the benefits of seniority, and other aspects of pay structure - could be publicly determined through a direct democratic process by the general populace for all organizations that are not privately owned (i.e. government agencies, non-profits, and for-profit enterprises). The same formula could be applied to the ownership of communal property shares in any enterprise. To avoid rapid salary swings, changes could be incremented over time. In addition, the highest and lowest wages across all of society could also be democratically set to reflect their holistic value as evaluated and agreed upon by the electorate. In both cases, this wage-setting process could be repeated regularly every few years. Using some combination of consistent calculation factors, this would reflect a more equitable distribution of wages within organizations and across whole industries, especially as some positions between those organizations become interchangeable. It also has the potential of

eliminating the lopsided educational funding, career flocking, research and development and other investment bias created by excessive wage imbalances. As our culture matures, the objective could be to amplify the social capital of fields that contribute constructively and holistically to society. To include a competitive variable in this equation, profit-sharing would not be part of these set wages, but in addition to it. However, profit-sharing could also be distributed according to exactly the same wage ratios. There could of course be other profit (or communal property share ownership) distribution mechanisms, but the goal is to curtail the stratospheric concentration of wealth in any individual or group of individuals.

6. As an important holistic value consideration, trades that fall under perverse utility (i.e. have a high probability of abusive, addictive, lethal or socially destructive impact) would be subject to train-test-monitor controls. This is important because these particular trades tend to erode social cohesion and moral evolution. Along the same lines, human interaction with the Earth's ecosystems should be compassionate, sustainable and low-or-no impact. I appreciate the core tenets and twelve design principles of the Permaculture movement, and think they provide an excellent starting point here. Further, the "precautionary principle" would ideally guide all technology development and deployment, harmonizing with slower product development cycles no longer driven by quarterly profit pressures.
7. Energy from renewable resources could be produced locally whenever possible, via community cooperatives, and ideally using business and residential structures as installation platforms, then aggregated and distributed within each geographic region as needed. The absolute end of fossil fuel and other nonrenewable energy production should, I think, be aggressively, rapidly and relentlessly pursued. This is not only for the sake of eliminating carbon emissions, but also because the very nature of concentrated-yield sources like petroleum distorts consumption expectations and reduces costs in the short term, while the long term reality of stable, steady-state energy sourcing dictates entirely different consumption and cost relationships. Local-renewable approaches align with the longer term energy expectations, and mirror the distributed nature of production, labor and political power in this new political economy.
8. Part of a fundamental education should, I would think, be the inclusion of many of the concepts addressed here and in *Political Economy and the Unitive Principle*, with an emphasis on comprehensive training in full-spectrum nourishment, synergistic dialogue, moral creativity and development, and an overview of the strengths and failings of various political economies. And of course students, parents and teachers should all share responsibility for the structure and management of a more participatory educational environment. I also believe exposure to other cultures has extraordinary benefit for the young, and to that end every child should have the opportunity to experience for themselves how the rest of the world lives, ideally by traveling to and living among other cultures. In fact, this is probably a critical



foundation for appreciating diverse viewpoints, navigating social complexities, and learning to think multidimensionally. It seems the broader and deeper the vocabulary of language, ideas and experiences made available to our young people, the more likely they will be able to manage complex responsibilities for the rest of their lives. But the intent behind all of these approaches should be to encourage the advanced moral function necessary to sustain the new political economy being proposed.

9. The importance of civic institutions and social movements that arise spontaneously - often operating independently of both markets and government - should also be recognized and vigorously facilitated. These not only fill gaps in needed services and resources, but may provide unexpected change agency toward a higher moral function in society. In particular, community development corporations (CDCs) and community land trusts (CLTs), when guided by community input and participation, offer a promising mode of communal transformation. At the same time, institutions that become well-established players in civil society should also be subject to direct democratic control – just as government, non-profit and for-profit enterprises would be under this proposal.
10. Clearly some attention must also be given to reforming the tax code. In market-centric economies like the U.S., taxes are often used to incentivize some behaviors while penalizing others. This tool should no longer be needed to the same degree, and the tax code could be substantially simplified as property ownership - and the surplus value of production – advances into more unitive strata – that is, as society evolves to value everything more collectively. As an interim step, a progressively tiered tax rate with very few deductions should work for individuals, along with a similarly tiered tax rate on net income for businesses, based on their size. In conjunction with this, a flat rate "wealth tax" could be implemented across the board to augment and perhaps eventually replace income taxes. As property position shifts, this wealth tax, in turn, could increasingly be calculated on accumulated shares of communal property.
11. The monetary system should be subject to the direct control of the people as a socialized central bank, in conjunction with a national network of non-profit cooperatives and community banking systems. For-profit lending institutions could be entirely eliminated, and fractional reserve banking would, at a minimum, be strictly restrained by a conservative leverage ratio – one that is either set in stone or can only be adjusted to be more conservative, not less. Government institutions would no longer pay interest on any loan, and indeed a set percentage of government loans would be lent interest-free to large scale entrepreneurs, non-profit community organizations, community land trusts and worker-cooperatives, in order to stimulate innovation, create a level playing field for emerging disciplines and technologies, and instigate a road to self-sufficiency. Special targeting of "outsider" innovation would also be an ideal standard, but realistically this may have to be left to the market side

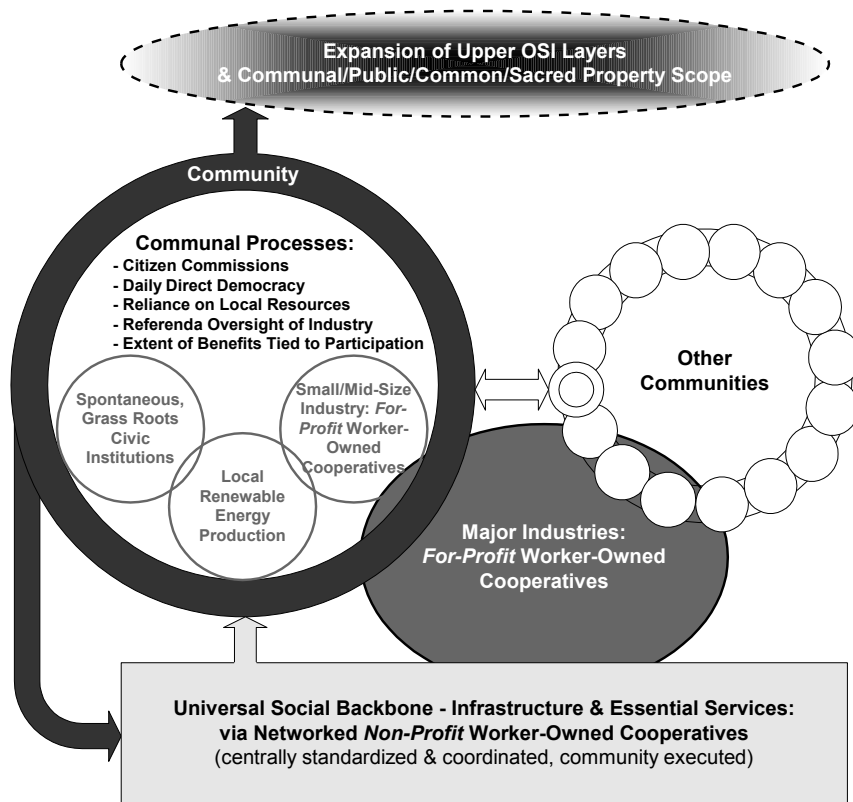
of the mix. There is also opportunity here to institute a gift economy with a certain percentage of government lending as well, and this should increase over time as the moral creativity of society evolves.

12. One of the consequences of financial system reform would be the elimination of the stock market as it exists today. It is difficult to conceive of any sort of stock exchange scenario that can't be exploited, or that doesn't contribute to market instability, as has been evidenced many times over in the U.S., and has only increased with the advent of automated computer trades. That said, there should probably be some opportunity for stock trades to occur, so that outsider innovations and other market advantages can be facilitated in emerging industries. However, the resulting stock exchange system would be of a much smaller scale than its current manifestation, and would be looked upon more as an interesting experiment than a central feature of the economy. There could also be strict restrictions on highly speculative investment instruments, and perhaps a small tax on every trade, to further contain volatility and reduce impact on the rest of the economy.
13. It may also be useful to either institute or promote different kinds of currency that operate mainly within different dimensions of the economy; for example, there could be gift dollars, market exchange dollars, public utility dollars, barter systems, community banking systems, and other currency independent of fiat money. These could still be sanctioned and coordinated through the socialized central bank, or just be encouraged and supported through independent institutions, so that morally advanced experiments can demonstrate proof-of-concept.
14. In order for any of these ideas to retain integrity and resist corruption in a fully functional democracy, the electorate must have access to both raw data and complex analysis tools about virtually every element of society. Whether it be a judge's rulings history, a manufacturer's product safety record, or a politician's legislative patterns, multidimensional data on every individual and institution in public life should be readily available via the web at no cost. In addition, users should be able to specify values criteria that represent their priorities, and dynamically display data according to those personal criteria. A standardized analysis tool could be provided across several competing information sources: nonprofit government-run clearinghouses, community-based information providers, and mass media news outlets.
15. What I describe in *Political Economy and the Unitive Principle* as “an expansion of the upper OSI layers of property” will become increasingly important over time. Initially this refers to what has been traditionally categorized as the creative thinking, cultural riches, intellectual property or academic pursuits in society, and especially that which thrives in the commons of universally shared media, research, innovation and communication. But really this also expands to include what are the most intangible, non-material elements of human endeavors, interaction, consciousness and self-expression, forming an abstracted realm of exchange that will always

transcend ridged institutions, mundane commodities, and predictable systems to produce the true wealth of human experience. These spontaneous, organic creations rely upon the “lower OSI layers” in order to thrive (for example, the aforementioned Universal Social Backbone eliminates antagonistic survival preoccupations and, when combined with voluntary reciprocation, reinforces relevant social contracts), and cannot advance without that support.

Below is a diagram that captures some of these ideas and how they relate to each other....

**Diagram: Level 7 Proposals**



Again, these are just generic considerations that would require tailoring for local environments and refinement over time, in this case mainly applicable in the U.S. Like any major revision, they will need to be monitored for their efficacy in delivering on core values, guiding principles and primary assumptions, and of course be adjusted and improved to align with these standards and to avoid unintended consequences.

So now we have a rough sketch of a Level 7 political economy that could replace state capitalism. But how can we begin moving toward some variation of these proposals? For

specific next steps, we need to understand what opposes positive change, and how to overcome that opposition.

## **Second, we need an effective change mechanism.**

Perhaps most importantly for an actionable vision of how a post-capitalist society will look and feel, there needs to be a clear path – a series of concise steps with comprehensible metrics – that illustrates how we can overcome any and all resistance to movement away from the status quo. This resistance is of course one of the greatest impedances to change. On the one hand there is the lukewarm inertia of many ordinary folks who do not share a keen sense of urgency or danger regarding the destructiveness of commercialist corporationism, and instead who may feel rather resentful at challenges to their current way of life. And on the other hand there are the well-fortified interests of power and privilege, who are acutely threatened by the prospect of change to a system that has, after all, generated wealth, influence and a sense of security and advantage for that ruling elite. From this latter group, we see concerted and sustained efforts to undermine any alternative approaches to the government, banking system and marketplace that have so facilitated their success, as well as well-funded and sustained marketing and PR campaigns to maintain the lukewarm inertia of a cooperative electorate.

In order to formulate an effective change mechanism, we must recognize both why the current flavor of feudalistic capitalism has been so successful, and also why it has been so resistant to more positive, systemic evolution. Both of these conditions can be ascribed to the prevalence of five factors among the general public – that is, the worker and consumer base that, often unwittingly or as the result of endless hoodwinking, supports the ruling elite:

1. *Ignorance and gullibility.* That is, having a limited understanding of self, community, government, technology and economics, along with a conditioned receptivity to deception.
2. *Moral immaturity.* That is, an inability to see a bigger picture beyond one's own selfish reflexes and small sphere of self-absorption.
3. *Indifference and callousness.* As an emotional response to negative economic externalities, or as a general disposition towards others, this expresses a profound lack of compassion and empathy.
4. *Habituation and addiction.* Whether from force of habit, or because of a physiological or psychological dependency, this result is an inability or strong unwillingness to attenuate destructive behaviors.

5. *Blind ideological tribalism.* As a consequence of social conditioning, a need for belonging, or an irrational and sometimes inexplicable conformism rooted in fear, this often overrides all other, more evolved instincts.

In our current environment, these five factors are targeted by multi-million-dollar marketing and PR campaigns that deceive, misinform and make false promises in order to amplify the factors, manipulating them in favor of consumerism, cronyism and pro-capitalist religious and political ideologies. In other words, commercialist corporationism obstinately encourages and rewards these factors. This is why young people become habituated to tobacco, alcohol, caffeine and video games; why farmers have come to rely upon pesticides, excessive fertilizer and monoculture; why so many consumers believe that everything from GMOs to Teflon cookware to farm-raised fish are completely safe; why rural landowners invite fracking onto their property; why so many are convinced that climate change is a hoax despite sound science to the contrary; why countless unnecessary medical procedures are performed each year; why millions of people who don't need certain drugs end up demanding them from their doctors; why many companies compulsively and pointlessly upgrade their computers or software on a regular basis; why an endless tide of consumers and workers around the globe become sick or die from unsafe products and manufacturing practices; and so on ad nauseum.

So because of these five factors – ignorance and gullibility, moral immaturity, indifference and callousness, habits and addictions, and blind tribal conformance – human society has rushed headlong into a massively self-destructive phase of existence by consuming things it really doesn't need and, more importantly, *things it didn't even know it wanted* until extraordinary amounts of money were expended to persuade consumers that profit-serving lies were true. And so any change mechanism must address these factors with the same vigor and scope that commercial enterprise has done...else the gentle, calm voice of reason will simply be drowned out by artfully orchestrated, massively funded bread and circuses the plutocracy keeps in play. This then becomes an even greater uphill effort when we consider that the “business as usual” status quo is so firmly rooted in most people's psyche that any new direction can be perceived as an affront to core values, to the perks of affluence, to nationalistic exceptionalism, or basically to “all that is good.” Beyond this, what eagerly shores up such popular sentiments (for its own benefit, of course) are deeply rutted patterns of control by the wealthiest elite over governments, political processes, the press, mass media and some of our most influential religious institutions. Through carefully engineered lobbying efforts and campaign financing that favors the wealthy, by weakening the rule of law with activist judges, through favorable legislation and laissez faire politicians, and by stoking a populist frenzy for “small government” and “freedom from regulation” with endless propaganda and religious zeal, the de facto oligarchs have masterfully established a bulwark against any change that might threaten their power.

So what is to be done? At first glance, the answer seems obvious: we must introduce alternative, healing countermeasures for each of these factors, as well as alternatives to the

commercialist engines that sustain them, so that society will change of its own accord as it grows and matures. To that end, the following might begin to define such countermeasures:

1. Educating people about economics, technology, the functions of government, and what is actually healthy and helpful for individual and collective well-being and happiness, all-the-while exposing the deceptions and misinformation that are mercilessly disseminated in service of profit.
2. Encouraging moral maturity, compassion and empathy through revised interpersonal standards, better awareness of multidimensional nourishment (see the *Notes on Integral Lifework & Civic Responsibility* section below for more detail on this), and inspirational modeling.
3. Holding accountable those government officials, businesspeople, and average citizens who persist in indifference and callousness, and doing this through moral education, social expectations and the rule of law, while also eliminating the social and economic incentives for this behavior.
4. Promoting holistic approaches to well-being that undermine addictions and self-destructive habits.
5. Creating new institutions that “compassionately tribalize” all of these more evolved, sophisticated and morally responsible values, and create a safe place to reinforce and propagate the most proven and constructive ideals.

Anyone who has endeavored to promote these or similar countermeasures has invariably faced the entrenched interests of the powers-that-be, along with the draconian defense mechanisms of that class. Even so, there has been progress and immensely positive examples of how alternatives to plutocratic state capitalism could evolve. Again I am reminded of democratic socialism in Europe, the Mondragon experiment, direct democracy in Switzerland, Canadian credit unions, etc.

But here’s the real problem: despite these advanced examples, the engines of state capitalism continue to accelerate and dominate all around the globe, subjugating every attempt at escape. There is no exit from the prevailing influence of commercialist corporationism currently in sight. And as an echo of Debord’s “society of the spectacle” or Herman and Chomsky’s “manufactured consent,” there is both astonishing complicity in mass media and debilitating complacency among the general public to remain placated, coddled and entitled by the status quo; there is every reason to remain on the sidelines and be entertained, and very little will to turn away from the calming, infantilizing teat.

So again, what can we do...?

At this juncture, it seems that a five-pronged approach will likely be necessary to promote and actualize the countermeasures above, with each prong entailing its own unique flavor of collective activism. These prongs include:

- ***Disrupting misinformation and pro-capitalist PR campaigns.***

There are many ways to do this, some more aggressive and confrontational than others. I remember years ago, when I lived in Germany, each TV advertisement was followed by silly stick-figure cartoons that made fun of the ad. After watching those cartoons, it was impossible to take the commercialistic rhetoric in the TV ads seriously, and a question mark was introduced to even the least attentive viewer about both the veracity of product and service claims, and the persuasiveness of the ads themselves. This sort of gentle cajoling that pokes holes in the effectiveness of advertising lies at one end of the disruption spectrum. Somewhere in the middle of the spectrum we have documentaries like *The Billionaires' Tea Party*, *The Corporation*, *Food, Inc.* and so on that strip the veneer off of the pro-capitalist PR to reveal its demeaning calculations. There are also activist street artists who undermine or subvert commercial messages in the public's eye (via "graffiti," public art installations, amended billboard advertisements, etc.), promoting alternative viewpoints that similarly bring corporate messaging into question. In a slightly more aggressive vein, there are the whistleblowers like Ronald Goldstein, Jeffrey Wigand, Nancy Olivieri, Stefan Kruszewski, Cynthia Cooper and Sherron Watkins, Courtland Kelley, David Graham, Bunny Greenhouse, Richard Bowen, John Kopchinski, Samy Kamkar and countless others who have brought corporate malfeasance to light, in many cases changing the course of commercialist corporationism itself in certain industries through high profile lawsuits, new regulatory legislations or large monetary settlements and punitive fines.

Beyond these selective, narrowly targeted efforts, there have been more sweeping attempts to curtail plutocracy through the rule of law. Among these are things like campaign finance reform, regulatory legislation and enforcement, the creation of consumer protection agencies like the CFPB, appointment of pro-consumer or pro-labor judges (as opposed to pro-corporate ones), and so on. Unfortunately, the effectiveness of these efforts depends almost entirely on who has the most political influence in a given moment, and advances are easily undone. In the course of the last forty years, some of the most successful and longstanding components of the federal regulatory bulwark in the U.S. were either obliterated or left unenforced – a feat accomplished by both political parties. Consider what by any objective measure have been the disastrous consequences of banking, agricultural, communications and transportation deregulation during that time: rampant monopolization and decreased competition in every one of these industries; the S&L and subprime mortgage crises; deterioration of transportation quality, availability and infrastructure, where a previous abundance of options that had never been profitable, but were nonetheless greatly needed, have completely vanished; plummeting worker wages and evaporation of living wage jobs; a precipitous decline in the U.S. agricultural trade balance; the extinction of family farms; an ever-increasing digital divide; the rapid decline of independent, well-funded news sources;

increasing costs to the poorest consumers for the most basic of commodities; and of course the destruction of many previously successful companies that delivered higher quality goods and services. Combining deregulation with a series of SCOTUS appointments that similarly empowered corporations over people, along with an astounding dearth of Congressional productivity, and plutocrats have effectively given themselves free reign over the American economy and electorate. Add to this the correlating state-level cascade of carefully orchestrated legislative gridlock, anti-labor sentiments, pro-corporate judiciary and deregulation in much of the U.S., and it is easy to see why this momentum has exacerbated wealth inequality, exploitation of American workers and consumers, depletion or destruction of countless natural resources, and enrichment of the One Percent.

Keeping this in mind, what then remains at the more extreme end of this particular spectrum of activism? Should hacktivists be encouraged to alter corporate messaging on websites and multimedia, thereby revealing repulsive truths about a particular company's products, services or labor practices? Should the broadcast of deceptive and manipulative pro-capitalist propaganda (as, for example, many of programs offered by FOX News) be interrupted or sabotaged in some technical way? Because influence and even "information" has become so asymmetrical, perhaps an asymmetrical response is warranted. I have long promoted the idea of a publically funded information clearinghouse, where users could query the profiles of various politicians, judges, public officials, companies, or even foreign governments regarding their performance history according to user-specified political ideologies, values hierarchies, economic strategies, labor relations ideals, consumer protections, etc. In this way, voters and consumers could easily and quickly identify individuals, businesses and resources that demonstrate a proven resonance with their own beliefs. But one carefully coordinated media blitz by Rupert Murdoch or his ilk could quickly paint such a clearinghouse as untrustworthy, the tool of a fringe political agenda, or an outright threat to "the American way of life," so that its role is discredited, defunded and squashed before it even comes into being. Sure, adequate information for rational decision-making is already available on the Internet for those with patience and persistence...but the corporate elite are ruthless in their efforts to steer the unsuspecting toward their version of the truth; even as communications monopolization reaches an historical peak, net neutrality itself has been under threat, leaving little doubt that the battle for information control is just beginning.

- ***Destabilizing "business as usual."***

In 2013 David Holmgren wrote a provocative paper entitled "Crash On Demand: Welcome to the Brown Tech Future." In it he suggests that if only 10% of the world's middle class reduced its consumption by 50% (and shifted 50% of their assets into community/household investments), this could result in an unrecoverable crash of current financial systems, opening the way to more responsible and sustainable scenarios. His overarching reasoning goes like this: "It seems obvious to me that it is easier to convince a minority that they will be better off by disengaging from the system than any efforts to build mass movements demanding impossible outcomes or convincing elites to turn off the system



that is currently keeping them in power.” Now plenty of folks have tried to poke holes in Holmgren’s arguments, including some in the Permaculture community that he helped foster, but I think that they are missing the central concern of his proposal, *which is that we cannot wait any longer for incremental changes to occur*. It is profoundly significant, I think, that someone who has been so committed to gradual, bottom-up change for so long is now willing to promote a more radical and rapid undermining of the status quo.

For however we achieve it, the complete destabilization of “business as usual” must become part of the discussion, as it is likely an inevitable stepping stone for any meaningful change. We must make way for radical and rapid transformation, even if our methods eliminate creature comforts for a majority of consumers – and perhaps the middle class in particular, since their consumption is so much greater than anyone else’s. In fact, we could say that this disruption of creature comforts is in itself a worthwhile goal, since it could be argued that such comforts are really part of the “bread and circuses” that have inoculated the masses against both dissatisfaction with the current system and any awareness of its most harmful externalities. Promoting the same spirit as successful boycotts from the past, Holmgren proposes that a shift in consumption and investment habits from 10% of the global middle class could create the desired disruption, but of course this is only one proposed means to an end. It may in fact be possible for an even smaller number of folks to have an even greater impact. What if every commercial shipping company found it impossible to deliver goods to major ports around the globe for six months? What if all Internet based e-commerce was disabled for a similar amount of time? What if a series of banking system failures at regular intervals coincided with an abundance of community-based banking and investment opportunities, so that a panicked withdrawal of personal assets from those banks could be locally rechanneled? What if energy delivery from commercial utilities became so unreliable that households and communities would be selfishly compelled to switch to locally produced solar and wind? In other words, I agree with Holmgren that only a minority needs convincing...the question for me simply becomes what minority can do the most, in which contexts, by what means.

Now there is a major ethical dilemma embedded here, and that is which of these means are the most skillful, just, and indeed will bear the most constructive fruit over the long run? Personally I am wary of any methods that do not conform to the character of their proposed outcome. For example, a violent revolution intended to achieve peace, or deceitful propaganda intended to bring about more open and transparent civic institutions, or oppression of one group of people in order to liberate another, or a temporary inequality that aims for ultimate equality. Not aligning the integrity of our current efforts with the intentionality of proposed solutions is a recipe for failure, in my view. Yet clearly everyone must decide these things according to their own conscience, and, just as clearly, actions need to be taken swiftly, without the paralysis and disempowerment of avoiding self-contradiction at all costs – especially since the costs here may include the survival of our species, along with a wealth of life on our planet. For further discussion, I offer some avenues to this kind of decision-making in the essay “Managing Complexity with Constructive Integralism.” Ultimately, however, the message must become clear that the accumulation of wealth – and

in particular accumulations that result the manipulation of government and consumers, the exploitation of workers, and the destruction of natural resources – will no longer be rewarded...and, in fact, will no longer be tolerated.

- *Promoting a clear, unified and comprehensible alternative vision at a grass roots level.*

This has admittedly been a challenge for many well-intentioned people, and I would humbly place myself in that camp. I find it difficult to water down concepts and nuance to such a degree that they become more intelligible or enthralling at the expense of what I feel are important distinctions. I firmly believe that many if not most people could appreciate subtle shades of gray over black-and-white if they are only allowed the emotional, temporal and social expansiveness to do so. Fueled by the still feudalistic, self-protective political economy of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the lightening-quick, podium-pounding, must-decide-now rhetoric of our modern age seems to have infected all public discourse – and indeed much education and information. There is little room for debate, little time to think, little space to breathe, and barely a pause to weigh things thoroughly, carefully or multidimensionally. Perhaps this has always been the case when those in power wish to manipulate those who enable them – “Quickly! Before you can think clearly! Make an impulsively self-destructive choice for my benefit!” But this has to stop for moral maturity to take root. Everything. Must. Slow. Down. And once this begins to occur, and folks take stock of their situation and the reality of the power structures in which they are unsuspectingly embroiled, I am convinced they will begin to see their way safely to new beginnings. History has shown this to be true – at least in terms of the long arc of social justice and a gradual reduction in overall violence and war; despite what news headlines and political fear mongering would have us believe, our species is slowly getting a handle on how to act like better, kinder humans. We just need some prompting, encouragement, space and time.

In much of my work I have sought to offer a rough sketch of new ways of being, both individually and collectively. But I have admittedly been unable to do this in ways that inspire the masses. In small classes and individual discussions, I have shared ideas, built community, inspired and been inspired. But I firmly suspect that I have neither the temperament nor the constitution to communicate even the best of my own ideas or anyone else’s in a widely accessible language. However, I believe the avenues of communication and education for those more skilled than I am are obvious: even young children should be provided a picture of how things could unfold in a post-capitalist society, and all education, from K-12 through university, should inculcate the fundamentals of that vision with the same priority that the basics of math, language, literature, history, civics, health, arts and other fundamentals should be. The real grass roots work begins with parents reading stories of an exciting new vision to their children at bedtime, instilling the importance and values of a dream that can excite every child’s imagination.

Elsewhere I have promoted small group meetings and community organizing, and I do think these would help spread the good news of an alternative political economy, as well as energize the efforts to actualize it. More and more, however, I do wonder whether escaping capitalism needs to be tied to a larger, more persuasive social agenda; something that is more visible, that inspires more empathy, and that naturally energizes large numbers of people. One such agenda could be the liberation of women around the world. What if the harmonizing, energizing component of a new political economy was the empowerment of women everywhere to have sovereignty over their own bodies, over their own reproductive choices, over their own roles and privileges in society, and over their cultural status and power? What if such fundamental rights could be the core objective of any and all new systems of government, production and commerce, and the primary metric with which success of those systems is measured over time? I believe this is something that should be seriously and thoroughly considered, so that such exciting, personally impactful and inciting values can propagate along with the admittedly dryer and less accessible visions of things like community banking, citizen commissions and locally produced electricity.

- ***Relentless advocacy for transitional proposals at all levels of government, from local to national, in the form of lobbying, petitions and legislative initiatives.***

This may seem obvious, but the challenge is that it must be omnipresent. Consider how quickly marriage equality has rocketed to the forefront of political and legislative agendas in the past decade. At first it seemed as though a conservative “defense of traditional marriage” was winning out over marriage equality at both state and federal levels. But how quickly that turned around! Within just a few election cycles, the tides have completely reversed, so that all around the country the percentage of the electorate in favor of marriage equality has now grown to the same percentage as those previously opposed to it! Incredible and inspiring, and at this point an unstoppable trend. In the same way, with the same passion, clarity of purpose, and honoring of equality, initiatives to reify a post-capitalist world will need to overtake the status quo by storm. This is just one prong of effort, but no less essential in its ability to educate, inform, energize and transform democratic institutions and the rule of law. Thankfully, there are already many nonprofit organizations in place that have been cultivating this approach for decades, and could therefore provide a springboard for more carefully coordinated efforts to enact Level 7 proposals. I have provided a small sampling of those organizations at <https://www.integrallifework.com/styled/page4/index.html>.

- ***Intense encouragement for the ruling elite – especially the wealthiest “behind the scenes” movers and shakers – to support transitional proposals and disengage from state-capitalist activities and influence.***

This is a tough one, mainly because it goes to the heart of the elite’s paranoia regarding a populist uprising – the anticipation of a just reprisal that oppressors always fear from the oppressed – and the elite is, in many ways, very well prepared. Due to their firmly

entrenched resistance, self-protective habits and melodramatic paranoia (such as that voiced by Tom Perkins in his January, 2014 *Wall Street Journal* letter), countermeasures in this arena may require disruption to insulated lifestyles, direct appeals to family members, aggressive use of the rule-of-law to increase accountability, and a carefully contrived means of devaluing assets and reducing wealth in order to create leverage and equalize power. Such interventions are likely to provoke draconian responses of the kind we have seen many times in reaction to WTO protests, Occupy encampments, and other forms of civil disobedience. We must remember that the reflex to crack down on populism or increase social controls is always present in a feudalist system, and that a careful review of the Patriot Act, the proposed Patriot Act II (“Domestic Security Enhancement Act”), the recent revelations of overreaching NSA domestic surveillance, the four U.S. citizens killed by U.S. drone attacks, and other such indicators expose the thin veneer of democracy that separates us from an Orwellian spiral. In the same vein, we must also be wary of the coopting of reformist activism, information and education by the wealthy elite in service to their own agendas, as exemplified by the Koch brothers and their ilk molding the Tea Party to their will.

There are of course those among the wealthy elite who already have empathy for the masses, who desire change, and who may already be engaged in transformative efforts. For these a quick primer on the principles found in Paolo Friere’s *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* is a critical educational step, in my view. But regardless of where their sympathies lie, the persuasion of the ruling elite must be planned with extraordinary care, an abundance of empathy, a clear action plan for them to follow once they embrace transition – for example, which efforts to fund, how to constructively use their influence, etc. to aid in the liberation of their fellows and transformation of the political economy. They must become willing and active participants in the realization of a Level 7 vision, not merely hibernating until the storms of change have passed. Of course, for the worst offenders – those who actively strive to elevate and insulate the One Percent in an oligarchic cocoon, resisting all collaborative efforts at humanization – there must also be firmly inescapable consequences if they continue to perpetuate crony capitalism and commercialist corporationism; because of their blindness and the reach of their influence, we cannot allow these few to accelerate negative Darwinian outcomes for the rest of humanity.

Who, specifically, should be the target of these efforts? Here are some starting points that may help with this exploration:

- Compile a list of people on governing boards for large or influential corporations and organizations, and document those who serve on multiple boards (“interlocking directorates”).
- Compile a list of people who attend meetings of the Bilderberg Group.
- Compile a list of all Super PAC founders and officers, and all of the Super PAC top donors.
- Compile a list of top executives and major shareholders of all transnational corporations and their subsidiaries.

- Compile a list of top executives and major shareholders of the 100 largest banks in the world (by assets) and their subsidiaries.
- Compile a list of the 1,000 wealthiest individuals on the planet.
- Expand all of these lists to include the friends, regular business associates and family members of the above.
- Cross-reference these lists to indicate individual and group concentrations of associations, wealth and/or direct influence, perhaps using a cumulative point-scoring system.
- Begin by addressing those with the highest cumulative scoring rank, then expand out from there.

You may notice that I did not include politicians in these lists, because elected representatives are in fact elected, and therefore already subject to the will of the people. Clearly, it would be helpful if there were additional electoral mechanisms to easily remove politicians from office whose actions are particularly egregious in enabling plutocracy, and so that may also become a worthwhile goal. But that is really just scratching the surface of the underlying problem, for politicians – even seemingly powerful world leaders – are really no different than monopoly newscasters or multimedia advertisers in that they too often are just parroting the words and will of their wealthy benefactors.

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So that's a start. As a whole, these five categories of effort comprise the preparatory activism that opens the door for escaping capitalism, first by allowing the countermeasures already described to be advocated and implemented, after which a some variation of the alternative political economy envisioned can be reified. Without a five-pronged fork to prod the process, the carefully orchestrated consumerist bread and circuses will continue to distract many good folks from any awareness of their own exploitation, and divide those who already do have some awareness as to what the wisest course of action would be.

Will these change mechanisms work? Those with a working knowledge of the history of cultural evolution will likely point out that many major, systemic changes occurred as the result of violent upheaval. But there are exceptions where nonviolent civil disobedience was the central driving force behind systemic change, and it those exceptions we should carefully observe and study. Women's Suffrage, Mahatma Gandhi's Salt Satyagraha, the UAW Sit-Ins, the Montgomery Bus Boycott, the Chicago Open Housing Movement, peace protests and marches against the Vietnam War, the Cape Town Peace March, Chilean's "no vote" on the Pinochet regime, the Jasmine Revolution in Tunisia, the Estonian "Singing Revolution" – these are among many examples of nonviolent civil resistance that spurred significant changes to dominant power structures and a revival of basic civil rights. Yes, there were

violent reactions to these movements from the entrenched elite, and sometimes from competing ideologies, but the movements themselves were grounded in a simple message: “We will not cease interfering with the status quo, and speaking out against it, until we have a say in how things are done.” And, by and large, they succeeded.

### **Third, we need a timetable.**

I would posit this simple question: Why wait? What possible reasons could we have to postpone what has to be done? Could it be fears about the unintended consequences of our efforts? Doubts about the urgency of the crisis? Confusion about what our own individual role should be? Insecurity about our own abilities or the importance of our contribution? All of these are valid emotional reactions to both change and to becoming an agent of change. Which is why we need to come together to discuss all of this, to strategize, to self-select for engagement in different prongs of activism, and to inspire each other and hold each other accountable. But we can't delay, because the scope and reach of commercialist corporationism keeps expanding exponentially, industrialization and exploitation of workers and the environment are accelerating in the developing world, and the effectiveness of new technologies to enable destruction of entire ecosystems – and indeed undermine human well-being across entire regions of the globe – is also rapidly increasing with each passing day. So the timetable is now. I predict that if we do not fully escape capitalism and substantially replace it with a morally mature political economy by 2025, our window of opportunity will close. Our grace period will be lost, and we will begin a slow but steady global decline into chaotic upheaval. Why 2025? It isn't entirely arbitrary, but what I consider a likely projection of how current trends in climate change, industrialization of the developing world, unsustainable agricultural practices, depletion of natural resources, continued dependence on fossil fuels, and ever-increasing corruption and dilution of democratic institutions everywhere will ultimately collide in the most self-destructive ways. That collision may occur sooner – and some of my more pessimistic friends and colleagues believe the precipitous decline has already begun – but there is, once again, no reason why we cannot begin to act now in hopes of stemming the ominous tide.

### **Fourth, we need a backup plan.**

Here I will propose more extreme responses that will undoubtedly shock gentler souls who equate compassion to being nice, and never forceful. Certainly you would think that, because I have evoked nonviolent civil disobedience as a central theme of action, I would likewise decry any forms of aggression or destructive response. But, as with the different prongs of activism discussed so far, I think this will be a question for each individual's conscience, a reaction guided by each person's skills, strengths, abilities and moral creativity. Yes, there are always the challenges of efficacy, unintended consequences, and aligning our attitudes and intentions with desired outcomes. Yet if, by the year 2026, the five-pronged approach has not borne sufficient fruit, and the status quo continues its destructive march

into oblivion, a new form of more radical activism will likely take shape on its own. It seems wise, then, to begin formulating a plan in advance that might focus those efforts and attenuate undesirable consequences that might amplify the destructiveness of capitalism rather than heal the wounds it has created.

So what are we talking about here? In some ways this is just escalating activism in the five prongs already described, with a new intensity and a more decisive edge. The disruption of misinformation and pro-capitalist PR campaigns becomes more aggressive, with the aforementioned hacking, sabotage, service interruptions and the like becoming increasingly persistent and pervasive; this is no longer an effort intended to promote accountability, awareness or mass education, but one that neutralizes corporate influence altogether. In the same way, efforts to destabilize “business as usual” would become more sustained, more widespread and more calamitous, even to the point where entire industries collapse from an inability to operate. Likewise the promotion of a grass roots vision must become more all-encompassing, so that every household can have a basic understanding of both the pitfalls of commercialist corporationism, and the benefits of Level 7 proposals. What of the oligarchs? While making every effort to avoid a new oppressor-victim dynamic, their ability to use wealth and influence to support commercialist corporationism would be brought to a complete halt. If someone insists on using their privilege to destroy, pillage and enslave, then that privilege must be taken away. We do not allow psychopaths to roam free in society, brutalizing and murdering others to satisfy their own appetites, and so we cannot allow plutocratic pathology to roam freely either; the elite must be restrained, definitively and permanently, through the redistribution of their wealth to nonprofit civic institutions that contribute to collective well-being. As for advocacy through the existing rule-of-law, it may be that all of the above can be achieved or enhanced in this way, though in the U.S. this would require a substantial overhaul to the U.S. Constitution to, for example, criminalize classism and high concentrations of wealth altogether.

I do want to reiterate the caveat that, in a our new political economy, other oppressive, exploitative or discompassionate structures could come into being that imitate the ones that we are trying to abolish if we do not concurrently align reform methods with desired outcomes, while developing and sustaining a collective moral maturity that supports those outcomes. One of many examples of this is organized labor, which began as a justifiable effort to counter the abuses of business owners and managers, thereby liberating workers from oppressive exploitation, but which eventually fostered institutions more concerned with empowering and enriching themselves than creating an equitable workplace. Although hopelessly distorted in the main, many conservative evaluations of failures in American industry and government rightly point to union corruption, overreach and entitlement as factors that destroyed quality, service and competitiveness in U.S. companies and institutions. And it is likely because of union abuses that they have become such an easy target for folks like Wisconsin Governor Scott Walker, to devastating effect. So this should be a blaring, compelling warning for any revolutionary cause: don’t become what you seek to replace. This is one reason I advocate community involvement in the management and accountability of local businesses; there needs to be direct democratic interaction with

enterprises that impact those communities, specifically so that worker-owners do not become too self-important in their calculations. It also why ongoing moral development is so critical to successful reform.

In family therapy, there is a triangle of roles played out in abusive relationships, and this echoes the idea we are touching on here. In an abusive household, there is often a perceived abuser, a perceived victim, and a perceived rescuer. But in reality these roles shift constantly, so that victim becomes abuser, rescuer becomes victim, and abuser becomes rescuer – or really any combination of interplay, even over the course of a single interaction. It is the fluid dynamic of abuser-victim-rescuer in which everyone participates that is the real problem here, not just the person who seems to be the dominant abuser. There are many large-scale examples of the same dynamic throughout history, where a liberated minority becomes the oppressor – in Europe, South America, Africa, The Middle East, Asia...pretty much everywhere socioeconomic revolutions have taken place. And these are the sorts of unfortunate patterns of role reversal that we want to avoid. Thus we need to interrupt the cycle of abuse in our new political economy, rather than just change who is donning which roles, or who has the most apparent power or positional influence. As Paulo Freire famously argued: “The oppressed must be their own example in their struggle for their redemption;” we must abandon oppressor-consciousness altogether, or it will simply re-manifest in some new form.

That said, the backup plan proposed here is still valuable as leverage. For the morally immature, fear is one of very few reliable motivators. It is far preferable to entice good deeds with love and positive encouragement, in my opinion, but sometimes fear of dire consequences is the only way to impede the reckless intentions of egoistic children – or pathologically self-absorbed adults. Gentle loving-kindness is all well-and-good for those receptive to it, but the more unevolved, animalistic predators among the human species tend to perceive gentle loving-kindness as weakness, and continue their predation on what they view as hapless sheep. And so the open acknowledgement of a tangible threat, should the chief purveyors of commercialist corporationism not finally choose to cease and desist, may be our only recourse when other encouragements fail. But of course the real hope is that none of this backup plan will be necessary – as a reality or even as potential leverage – because we will all be growing up quickly to face our predicament as mature adults, rather than rebellious children, so that society naturally constrains and redirects the activities of egotists and sociopaths. That is really the best insurance against history repeating itself.

### **Fifth, we must constantly remind ourselves *why this is so important.***

The causal foundations of the capitalist problem have been identified at many times and in many ways, but really they all point to the same thing: the rewarding, enabling and indeed elevation of the most base and destructive of human impulses above our more prosocial, empathetic and mutually compassionate ones, with consistently devastating results.



Whenever there are extreme concentrations and inequitable divisions of wealth and power – which are, unarguably, the most prolific and enduring consequences of state capitalism and commercialist corporationism – all other values tend to be subjugated to that matrix, if they aren't discarded entirely. There are so many examples of this, but let's explore a few of the more potent reminders.

How does the enslavement of millions of workers around the globe promote the value of liberty? Proponents of capitalism have claimed for years that sweatshops, abusive labor practices and the like are economic opportunities for the desperately poor, and therefore should be lauded rather than criticized (see Robert Tracinski's writings on the topic for an example of this). And of course this lauding is a lie, for just as share cropping was no different than slavery, and the truck system was no different than slavery, the current exploitative labor environments in the developing world are just as hostile and lethal as any forced labor camp. The many exposés of the 1990s on Central America's maquiladoras brought this into broad public awareness, but even as worker conditions marginally improved there, the abuses just migrated to other countries. As recently as the 2012 Dhaka garment factory fire and the Savar building collapse a year later, we continue to have potent reminders of modern abuse and implicit enslavement of human beings in service of a free market. An only slightly different manifestation of the same trend is the growing problem of human trafficking. According to the *ILO Global Estimate of Forced Labour. Results and Methodology 2012* there were 29.9 million victims of forced labor around the world, 90% of which were in the private economy, 68% of which were victims of forced labor, and 22% of which were employed in forced sexual exploitation. The ILO indicates human trafficking to be in third place for illegal business – after drug dealing and arms trading. Such exploitation has always been a consequence of elevating the profit motive above other, more humanistic values, and has been a blatant component of capitalist enterprise at one time or another just about everywhere on Earth.

How does the monopolization of whole industries by megaconglomerates aid innovation, beneficial competition or consumer choice? For this is another indisputable outcome of commercialist corporationism. Despite antitrust laws, innovative startups, and the initial perception of consumer choice in emerging industries, the inevitable outcome in all longstanding arenas of production is a handful of huge companies that dominate all others. And even among those companies, we see that substantive differentiation in quality, durability or features is an illusion, because all the of the components of competing products actually end up being produced in the same handful of factories. And even when innovation does occur in some outsider startup, it is almost always just a matter of time before the outsider founders either sell the company to one of the existing monopolies, the startup is acquired by a monopoly in a hostile takeover, or the startup itself begins to accumulate competing companies. Will Tesla still be an independent car manufacturer ten years from now, or will it somehow become entangled with one or more of the auto industry behemoths? If history is any guide, the prospect of independence is doubtful. So in everything from food production to electronics to telecom companies to banks, consumer choices become fewer and fewer with each passing decade, until really there is often only one

option, all previous illusions of “voting with your dollars” completely evaporate, and innovations that challenge existing monopolies are squashed before they ever make it to market.

How do crony capitalism and a revolving door between industry and government leadership support representative democracies? Well of course they don’t at all. The only values or agendas that get represented when revolving doors and cronyism are in play are those of the cronies themselves; the more diverse interests of the electorate – indeed even the majority interests – will be ignored if they do not coincide with corporate interests. Crony capitalism is actually disparaged across a broad ideological spectrum, because it interferes as much with free market competition as it does with democratic governance. Yet despite this collective disdain, essential bulwarks against cronyism, such as campaign finance reform, have either failed to move forward or been rolled backward. Even those like Barack Obama, who campaigned on a platform of “sweeping ethics reform” regarding the undue influence of money in politics, have still succumbed to the age-old practice of appointing major fundraisers, corporate lobbyists and industry insiders to government positions, where those appointees continue to promote the same pro-capitalist agendas that they did in the private sector.

How do perverse incentives improve our quality of life? This issue has a particularly personal resonance for me. In U.S. healthcare, there is very little incentive to help people maintain healthy lifestyles or treat the underlying causes of their maladies. Why? Because doctors in the U.S. don’t get paid for keeping their patients healthy, they get paid for procedures they perform, and the more complex the procedure – or the more they perform – the more they get paid, regardless of whether the procedures address the causes of ill health. Along the same lines, pharmaceutical companies make most of their money medicating away symptoms with drugs that are chronically administered, rather than from drugs that heal or eradicate illness. Consider that the most expensive equipment (i.e. capital items) in any hospital are not rehabilitation equipment, or surgical equipment, or any sort of treatment equipment, but *diagnostic* equipment – that is, equipment that makes the most money for the hospital because it is used the most frequently to justify additional, often expensive procedures. What if the same level of research, development and investment was made in preventative medicine? Wouldn’t that provide a better health outcome for everyone? Well of course it would, but it wouldn’t provide the same amount of profit for insurance companies, hospitals, doctors, biotech and pharmaceutical companies, or anyone else in the medical food chain. This is a particularly pernicious example of how perverse incentives manifest, but they evidence themselves everywhere – in executive bonuses calculated on inflated short-term earnings, in the blackened hearts of hedge fund managers profiting from market distortions they facilitate, and so on. And of course this isn’t restricted to for-profit enterprise, as government policies have created similar mistakes – for example, Appalachian parents pulling their kids out of literacy classes for fear of losing their monthly disability checks. In all of these cases, however, the same immature impetus – an individual or collective desire for profit – is the root of the problem; it doesn’t matter that a system’s poor design allows it to be exploited, it matters that the exploitation is driven by a common motivation.

These are some questions that dominate the discussion. To expand on this topic, here are some of the pitfalls of modern capitalism discussed in *Political Economy and the Unitive Principle*.

First, we should establish that capitalism, and in particular U.S.-style capitalism - what I have referred to as commercialist corporationism - is by far the most prevalent and powerful component of political economy in the world today. This has been true for roughly the past 150 years. Indeed alternatives have either collapsed, as in the case of the U.S.S.R., or for other reasons turned to market-centric practices, as in the case of China. So...why is this status quo a problem? Doesn't the dominance and success of commercialist corporationism for over a century prove its worth? Hasn't capitalism civilized and integrated the world through trade? Don't the benefits of capitalism far outweigh it's disadvantages? Well, actually no, none of this is completely true. Many folks have composed carefully detailed critiques of capitalism and the deleterious consequences of concentrated wealth. Some influential contemporary voices include Noam Chomsky, Naomi Klein, Greg Palast, Robert Greenwald, Joel Bakan, David Schweikart, Paul Piff, Chris Hedges and Michael Moore, but there are many others. I have also written about the shortcomings of our particular flavor of capitalism in several essays and books. It is fairly straightforward to summarize the most negative impacts when nearly everything becomes private property available for trade; these include:

- The irreversible destruction of irreplaceable individual species and entire ecosystems on planet Earth. Among other equally tragic things, this results in a loss of biological diversity and interdependence that developed over billions of years, which in turn undermines the stability of Earth's biosphere as a whole, and of course the quality of human existence as well. Whether via pesticides and industrial pollution, or the unrelenting decimation of natural habitat for agriculture and housing, or industry-induced climate change, or the devastating damage wrought by wars over resources, or the reckless consumption of water and wild animals...privatization and trade have consistently led to widespread ecological destruction.
- The depletion of nonrenewable natural resources that not only have added much value to human civilization in the past, but could prove to be a dangerous deficit for future generations once they are fully depleted.
- An increasing homogenization and commoditization of culture that facilitates ubiquitous distribution of equally homogenous goods. This enables global economies of scale and a corresponding amplification of profit in everything from production and distribution to service and other secondary markets, but it also depletes humanity of a cultural diversity that has proven essential to human survival over time. The resulting intellectual, creative and cultural poverty-of-mind is in many ways just as threatening to our future survival as the depletion of nonrenewable natural resources. Along the same lines, there is also an inevitable decline, stagnation and disinvestment in any area of culture, science,

technology, innovation, research, education, infrastructure and so on that does not lend itself to immediate, short-term commercial advantage – even though for-profit enterprise may ultimately be reliant on those supportive structures over the long term. Thus academic research and fundamental science are defunded, arts and humanities education evaporates, the transportation system and electrical grid become increasingly strained and unreliable, and diversified or creative thinking that has no clear competitive benefit is marginalized or repressed.

- A deliberate conditioning of consumption habits that create lifelong dependencies and interrupt healthy self-nourishment. I have called this "externalization," which is simply the incorrect and disempowering assumption that all paths leading to physical, emotional, spiritual and intellectual nourishment (i.e. happiness, love, satiation, contentment, safety, success, belonging, purpose, etc.) are dependent on the consumption of goods and services provided by other people. This estrangement from the wealth of internal, self-sufficient resources available to every human being contributes to the povertization of individuals and cultures, and to an increasing number of health problems among commercialized populations. These include: chronic depression; obesity and Type II Diabetes; addictions to nicotine, alcohol, caffeine and various prescription drugs; ADHD and other childhood developmental deficits; anxiety and stress disorders; carpal tunnel syndrome; cancer; various patterns of compulsive, excessive consumption; and of course long dark nights of the soul. Many of these consequences are now considered epidemics in America.
- The exaggeration of hierarchical class divisions between people around the globe, where the lowest class, which is brutally and mercilessly exploited by all other classes, makes up ninety per cent or more of the population, and the most elevated classes, which receive ninety percent of the benefit of all production, make up less than ten percent of the population. Not only is this exploitation morally reprehensible, it also inevitably leads to deep antagonisms and conflict between the classes, which has already resulted in violent revolutions, ongoing terrorism and the intermittent threat of full scale war.
- The endangerment of all inhabitants of Earth through the constant striving of nation states to gain the upper economic hand using (or threatening to use) increasingly lethal and widely proliferated weapons of mass destruction.
- The demonstrated tendency for severe swings in economic stability as the result of excessive risk taking, deceptive efforts to manipulate trade mechanisms for greater profit, ignorance of externalities, monopolization, and of course the lack of regulatory controls to reign in such behaviors. These lead to inevitable market inefficiencies and failures.
- Extreme concentrations of wealth and influence in corporations, which in turn undermine democracy through clientism and cronyism. In the U.S., corporations write legislation that favors their industry and then fund the elections of politicians who vote that legislation into law. Corporations also aggressively fund political propaganda

campaigns that misinform voters about legislation or politicians that do not favor corporate agendas. And, as a final blow to any hope of reversing these trends, corporations have also secured constitutional protections under a fiction of "corporate personhood," which they themselves legally engineered. These and other trends illustrate a continuous erosion of political, economic and democratic freedom and power - on a global scale - for all but a tiny minority of plutocrats.

- As a more subtle but pervasive consequence of U.S.-style capitalism, the constant growth and expansion pressures inherent to that system have created excessively rapid pacing in the development, production and distribution of new technologies. This has accelerated changes in human habits, interactions and society to such a degree that our ability to adapt vacillates between high levels of stress as we attempt to comply with change, to an irrational backlash of rejecting change because it is happening too fast. Neither of these polarities is constructive or supportive to human mental, emotional, physical or indeed spiritual faculties.
- In terms of moral creativity and function, market-centric capitalism inevitably constrains morality to its lowest common denominators. For example, acquisitiveness is preferable to generosity; deception is honored above honesty; hostile competition is rewarded more than cooperative kindness; callous disregard for others is valued more than compassion or empathy; and so on.

These outcomes are well-documented, longstanding and indisputable impacts of U.S.-style capitalism, and have manifested in almost every culture where this particular feudalistic memplex has taken root. In addition, a perfect storm of destruction has manifested where three key influences intersect: first, growth-dependent capitalist economies drive accelerated innovation, production volume and resource utilization that far exceed the ability of individuals and society to adapt or the Earth's natural systems to sustain; second, the obsession with increased, short-term profits, combined with consumer addictions to newer, cheaper, sooner and more, have undermined quality, durability, reliability and safety in nearly all products and services to a devastating degree; and third, technological complexity is growing exponentially, far exceeding human capacities to manage interactions, predict outcomes or measure externalities.

The list of capitalist failures can of course be vastly expanded. In fact, in one of the more tremendous ironies of modern times, nearly all of the cultural destruction that socially conservative free-market proponents attribute to progressive ideals can be laid at the feet of commercialist corporationism. What caused the perceived breakdown of the cohesive family unit, for example? Well, wasn't it a free market that saturated mass media with messages that love should always be titillating and new, that physical attraction was the key to happy relationships, and that personal gratification was more important than interpersonal commitment? Wasn't it a free market that successfully championed variety, convenience and novelty above the traditions of family togetherness, so that fast food and individual microwavable dinners won out over shared meals at the dining room table, and TV shows,

iPods and video games won out over parlor games, family night, making music or reading aloud to each other? Wasn't it a free market that targeted children in advertising, entertainment and product development, further dividing the family into separate consumer groups that no longer depended on one another? And didn't the rampant consumerism driven by a free market help persuade everyone in a family that they needed to work as much as possible, so that children, mothers and fathers could all have more money to spend, while spending less time with each other? At the same time, wasn't it also a free market that created low wage jobs, jobs that in fact made workers dependent on government assistance to feed their families, so that economic strain and ever-decreasing buying power forced more and more people in a household to get a job and spend more time apart? And it isn't it – to add insult to irony – the same conservative voices that champion free market solutions who in turn block any increase to the minimum wage? The hypocrisy of social conservatives who claim to support both a free market and family values is, in this regard, stunning.

Are there any advantages to commercialist corporationism that should be retained in a new political economy? I believe the two central features that should be preserved are the diverse and multifaceted competition for goods and services, and the ability of customers to determine the ultimate success of any enterprise. There are ways to accomplish these features without relying primarily on a profit motive or enlightened self-interest, and I touch on some new ideas, as well as some older ones that have already been successfully implemented, in *Political Economy and the Unitive Principle*. There is even a place for limited for-profit enterprises – as long as they are always in competition with non-profit ones, are managed by worker-owners, are not dependent on constant growth or depletion of natural resources to exist, and are subject to community-level checks and balances, direct democracy feedback mechanisms, and a judiciary, legislative, executive and press corps that are firmly segregated from for-profit influences. We must always remember that the problems of the modern age are not inherent to competitive innovation, but to the concentrations of wealth and power that leverage competitive innovation solely for their own benefit.

## **Notes on Integral Lifework & Civic Responsibility**

Any new, more progressive system will fail unless we accelerate our individual and collective moral evolution to embody a more inclusive, collaborative, equitable and compassionate meta-ethical framework. This is in contrast to our current system, which reinforces ethical regression. History demonstrates time and again that civic institutions must operate from principles at the same level moral maturity as the electorate, because whenever they attempt to exceed that level, they ultimately become ineffective, corrupt or collapse entirely. And because state capitalism has endeavored for so long to infantilize consumers into perpetual dependency, selfless and compassionate participation in government and the democratic process has waned proportionately. But we can no longer remain children. For one thing, we now employ technologies that demand a more adult perspective and unshakable commitment to use them responsibly. Consider the damage oil leaks and spills have caused around the globe – in Alaska, the Gulf of Mexico, the Niger Delta, the Kolva River, the

Persian Gulf, the English Channel, Alberta's tar sands, and the Bay of Campeche – almost always as the result of disregarding safe drilling practices, or to save money in the cost of transport or production, or get oil to market more quickly. And as each wave of new technological innovations arrives in the petroleum industry, such greedy proclivities are further enabled, and the scope of pollution and destruction expands. Until relatively recently, it wasn't economically feasible to frack natural gas out of the ground. New technologies made that possible, just as they make deep sea drilling more accessible, or tar sands extraction more profitable, and so on. And although the correlation with increased risks to aquifers, wildlife, and indeed human health become more evident with each passing day, the horrific damage continues.

And this is the trend of increasing technological sophistication and destructive capability, without concurrent moral and civic evolution, in all sorts of instances. So, for example, TEPCO's various efforts to cover up the intensity of radiation leakage at Fukushima reveal a self-protective immaturity that disregards the well-being of others, an immaturity which has been echoed by the Japanese government's collusion in concealing the deaths of Fukushima workers and the radiation health risks of foods grown nearby. These are the behaviors of naughty children who vociferously deny wrongdoing to avoid punishment and save face; it is despicable, but it is predictable in the morally immature. In Russia we have witnessed an insecure, paranoid, megalomaniacal dictator rise to power and keep it for over a decade, testing the political, economic and indeed geographical boundaries of the world community at every turn like a petulant teenager. And yet, again embodying the whims of a rebellious, self-important child, Vladimir Putin won't let anyone take away his precious nuclear toys. After all, Russia must regain its former glory as a world power, and part of that status means retaining a nuclear stockpile that rivals that of the U.S. Shockingly, a majority of the Russian electorate seems content to let Putin perpetuate his megalomaniacal farce, if only to feel less of a sting over the failure of the U.S.S.R. Again...this is predictable behavior of the morally immature, in this case involving technology that can annihilate life on Earth several times over. And no one could doubt the childishness of the Bush administration's pursuit and execution of the Iraq war – lying about Saddam Hussein's WMDs as a pretext for invasion, mishandling the reconstruction with billion\$ in no-bid contracts for Dick Cheney's buddies at Halliburton, ignoring the concerns and counsel of world allies, etc. Subsequently, the Iraq War played out like a gang of wealthy schoolyard bullies trying out their newest lethal gadgets on the poor part of town – a trend that has, unfortunately, continued under the Obama administration's drone attacks. And yes, the American people bear responsibility for electing and reelecting into office such infantile, brutish insanity, which of course speaks to the dearth of moral development of the U.S. electorate across both dominant political parties.

We could continue along these lines by illustrating how various industries - pharmaceuticals, agriculture, biotech, tobacco, etc. – have all demonstrated wanton disregard for our collective well-being and the stability of planetary ecosystems by developing dangerous technologies, then recklessly deploying and marketing them for the sake of increased shareholder wealth. Why are genetically modified organisms allowed to reproduce in the wild? How have toys

produced in China been allowed to contain heavy metals or plasticizing chemicals that endanger children everywhere? How did electronic cigarettes become available without health regulation? All of this points to the same mechanism: technological innovation that has moved faster than humanity's moral development. And so this begs the question of how to inspire moral development itself, so that our species can catch up with its scientific prowess. As a developmental issue, this is simply about emphasis: we have become quite adept at training and improving our analytical capacities, and even our physical capacities, but we have not applied the same vigor and rigor to our emotional development, social development, spiritual potential and so forth. This lopsided emphasis is one of the imbalances that Integral Lifework seeks to remedy.

To that end, much of my other writing addresses the details of Integral Lifework – from a theoretical exploration in *True Love: Integral Lifework Theory & Practice* to a more simplified discussion in *Being Well*, with many essays and articles in between. Essentially, though, this practice is about nourishing every aspect of our being, and harmonizing that nourishment so that no aspect is overemphasized or neglected. One of the easiest ways to approach Integral Lifework is to take an inventory of self-care in each of the thirteen dimensions of nourishment, and I've included that exercise below. The beginning of this particular journey is simply to focus on those areas that may have been undervalued or depleted over time, giving them just a little extra attention and energy for several weeks, while concurrently attenuating areas that may have been overindulged. The results can be remarkable...but only if we commit to an ongoing personal practice. And what does all of this have to do with moral development? It is my contention that we cannot evolve, in a moral sense, unless we are fully nourishing all dimensions of our being. Such harmonized support is required for more unitive structures – that is, more affectionately compassionate attitudes and habits involving ourselves and others – to flourish and grow. This is my hypothesis, with many of its assumptions grounded in time-honored mystical traditions from around the world, as well as observations from my own work and life. But the proof is in the pudding, as they say: it is only possible to observe the benefits of the practice once we engage it fully. Remaining outside of the practice and speculating about its efficacy isn't a very tenable position; *ab intra* validation always trumps *ab extra* speculation. So my exhortation would be to give it a try, with the only costs being a little time, a little learning, and a little refinement to personal intentions.

### ***Integral Lifework Nourishment Review***

One way to inventory the quality of our self-care is to rate each of the categories listed in the table below. To gather some different perspectives, you can make separate copies of the following table for yourself and three or more of your closest friends, family members and loved ones, and then let each person finish the assessment independently before comparing them. Consider the combination of intentions, practices, habits and natural rhythms in your life that contribute to the nourishment of each dimension, and rate them according to the following valuations:



1. Extremely dissatisfied, doing very poorly
2. Slightly dissatisfied or doing a bit poorly, below expectations
3. Satisfied, doing okay, though could still improve
4. Satisfied and content, meeting expectations
5. Extremely satisfied, doing very well, above expectations


After you have completed the exercise, take some time to compare how you rated yourself in one dimension with how other people rated you there. Did the observations of others align with how you see yourself? If not, why do you think that is the case? Did all dimensions have fairly similar ratings – are they in balance with each other? Are there areas you would like to improve? If you discover some aspect of self that is undernourished, consider giving it some special attention to it over the next month or two, providing targeted care and nurturing for that dimension. Then, if you try this assessment again at a later date, you will be able to track how your self-care changes over time.

For further clarification about each of the thirteen dimensions, additional information is available at [www.integrallifework.com](http://www.integrallifework.com). The “Integral Lifework Overview and FAQ” on the website has a brief summary, and an in-depth exploration of these nourishment centers is covered in the books *True Love* and *Being Well*.







|  | <i>Self</i> | <i>Others</i> |
|--|-------------|---------------|
| <b>Physical health and well-being</b> – consider diet, regular exercise, physical strength, energy, quality of sleep, chronic or recurrent illness, weight management, overall sense of well-being. Are you happy with your body? Is your body happy with you?   |             |               |
| <b>Positive emotions, creativity and self-expression</b> – consider self-expression, authenticity in communication, regular creativity and imagination, overall happiness and contentment, sense of playfulness. Is there lots of joy?   |             |               |
| <b>Relationships and social acceptance</b> – consider quality of friendships, feeling appreciated and valued, regular expressions of love to and from other people, overall sense of connectedness and intimacy, sense of belonging.   |             |               |
| <b>Learning and intellectual stimulation</b> – consider regular exposure to new ideas and opinions, excitement about learning, diversity of interests, mental alertness, overall sense of intellectual curiosity and openness, ability to think carefully and critically. Do new ideas and information excite you? Are you curious?  |             |               |
| <b>Accomplishment and fulfillment</b> – consider satisfaction over career, hobbies and life's work, sense of overall purpose, excitement about plans and goals, strength of focus, and your endurance and follow-through. Do you feel purposeful each day?   |             |               |
| <b>Spiritual Ground</b> – consider the strength and consistency of connection and relationship with Inner Light, Universal Consciousness, Divine Presence, Spirit Guide(s), Soul, Spiritual Realm, Ground of All Being, Essence, or other spiritual dimension; consider ability to convert that into action, especially generosity of time, energy and resources, and regular gratitude. Is your spirit thriving?  |             |               |
| <b>Healing of the past</b> – consider level of peace, tranquility, forgiveness and healing around any traumatic events of the past, as well as the quality of relationships with all family members in the present. Do you get along well? Is there lots of love?  |             |               |
| <b>Legacy, pleasure and reproduction</b> – consider quality of what will be left behind after death, the frequency of pleasurable experiences, and the sense of safety and stability in the home environment. Do you feel secure?  |             |               |
| <b>Ease of shifting between modes of processing your experiences</b> – evaluate how easy it is to move from a logical, intellectual way of thinking to a felt or intuitive mode of decision-making; or from being grounded in the body's felt sensations and messages to analytical thought; or from any of these to a deeply spiritual space within; or from any one of these to any other. Do you feel flexible? |             |               |
| <b>Self-concept</b> – consider self-confidence and possession of a clear and accurate awareness about own strengths and weaknesses; consider compassionate acceptance of own faults and idiosyncrasies while at the same time being able to remain humble. Do you feel courageous? Do you respect yourself?  |             |               |
| <b>Sexuality</b> – consider level of satisfaction with sex life, level of genuine intimacy with self or a partner, quality of physical openness, enjoyment of own body, and confidence with sexuality. Are you satisfied?  |             |               |
| <b>Integrity</b> – evaluate the ability to harmonize thoughts and intentions with words, words with actions, and actions with taking responsibility for the consequences of those actions. Do all of these align with each other?  |             |               |
| <b>Artful will</b> – consider how often you feel “in the flow,” where everything in your life feels like it is in harmony, where synchronicity happens and our sense you are moving in the right direction. Contrast that with how often you feel frustrated and “out-of-synch.” Do you feel like the stars are aligning for you (5), or do you feel thwarted (1)?   |             |               |




If we can agree that pursuing moral evolution is a worthwhile goal, we do still need a loose framework with which to evaluate that evolution. What follows is a chart I've used to illustrate various strata in moral development, as derived from my own observations and experiences, and further shaped and informed by the work of many folks – Aristotle, Tielhard de Chardin, Piaget, Aurobindo, Merton, Gebser, Kohlberg, Wilber, and others – who are considerably more learned than I. I think it fairly self-explanatory, except in two respects: first, these strata are not permanent or fixed, but are in constant movement, as is our ability to navigate them; and second, different aspects of our being will inhabit different strata at different times, depending on the situational context and our level of self-care and self-compassion in each dimension. What this means is that we do not necessarily evolve all of our being at once, that we won't sometimes spontaneously regress, and that having demonstrated moral maturity in one context does not guarantee that we will demonstrate that same level in a different context. But the mean of our intentions, musings and activities will tend to congregate within neighboring moral strata – if we remain conscious and diligent in our trajectory, continue to harmoniously nourish ourselves across multiple dimensions of being, and nurture a desire for the most compassionate good for the greatest, most inclusive number as our governing intention. These are loose and fuzzy guidelines at best, but I do think they point us in a worthwhile direction.

### *Strata of Moral Valuation*

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| <p><b>Applied<br/>Nonduality</b></p>  | <p>This is an expression of mystical, nondual consciousness as a supremely unfettered existence where intuitions of universal freedom are fully realized. There is a certain irony that the autonomy one's ego so craved in earlier strata is now readily available through the absence of ego. The lack of a distinct sense of self in some ways eradicates any sort of identification at all - so non-being is equivalent to being, and self is equivalent to both nothingness and previous conceptions of "the All." Here inexhaustible loving kindness is conclusively harmonized through advanced forms of discernment. An enduring all-inclusive love-consciousness integrates all previous moral orientations, current intentions and actions into a carefree - but nevertheless carefully balanced - flow; a flow into what might be described as "ultimate purpose." Previous orientations are then viewed not as right or wrong, but as a spectrum of imperfect expressions of that ultimate purpose. In this final letting go of self-identification, all nourishment is love, all love is nourishment, and all values hierarchies are subordinated to skillfully compassionate affection. At the same time, this realization and any other constructs become just that: constructs, inventions of the mind. Up until now, the main concern of moral valuation has been the orientation of self-to-self, self-to-other, self-to-community, self-to-environment, self-to-planet, self-to-humanity, self-to-nothingness, self-to-All, etc. In other words, previous values hierarchies tended to be preoccupied with the context of the self. In this stratum, that context is no longer relevant, because there is no self, and no concept of no-self. Along the same lines, the past/present/future construction of time dissolves into insignificance.</p> |
| <p><br/><b>Unknowing<br/>Emptiness</b></p> | <p>This mode of being has been the backdrop for all previous strata, and has woven itself into those strata at various points in the form of "letting go" of previous constructs and patterns of being – we just haven't fully comprehended the scope of that letting go until now. This is the stratum first of radical deconstruction, then chaotic revolution, a tearing asunder of the veil of certainty, challenging of self-concept and of the nature of all relationships and interdependencies, and fluid revision of the context and content of all moral strata and systems. Once again, the theme of acquiescence has always been part of previous transitions and evolutions, but here we fully inhabit that space and allow it to permeate our consciousness and interactions. This is the gap where faith and doubt collide, where rational and nonrational reconcile, where manifest and unmanifest infuse each other; this is the crucible where <i>agape</i> and emptiness forge a new alloy. As expressed in actions and</p>   |

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|  | <p>intentions, this stratum frequently feels like either fragmenting disruption on the one hand, or perceived paralysis on the other: either a grenade of Light that exposes underlying stucturelessness, or the quiescent twilight of action-without- action. Ultimately, however, this is where multidialectical tensions can resolve in neutral stillness, where negation becomes the midwife of creation, and where detachment creates a fertile ground for more skillful love-consciousness. In terms of time-space, "now" still predominates, but its context dilates to encompass every point in the continuum previously considered past, present or future; the now becomes <i>potential</i> even as it ceases "becoming" anything at all.</p>   |
| <br><b>Spiritual<br/>Universality</b>   | <p>Through persistent and intimate connection with an absolute, universal inclusiveness of being, moral function is defined by whatever most skillfully facilitates "the good of All." "The good of All," in turned, is an evolving intuition, a successive unfolding of mystical awareness in concert with dialectical cognition and neutrality of personal will. However, it tends to remain more of a felt sense than an exclusively rational construct. Skillfulness can still be refined through empirical experimentation and observation, but it is always subjected to a filter of intensified and unconditional compassion - a felt sense as well. Identification with the All is fluid and seamless, and moral thought and action flowing from this identification are also fluid and seamless. That is not to say that this stratum can't occasionally be interrupted by regressions to previous strata within one or more dimensions of being (usually as a reaction to overwhelming or stressful situations), but the contrast and incongruity of those regressions is strikingly obvious. Past, present and future become a continuum where "now" is less fixed; the experience of time itself is more relative and process-oriented. Nevertheless, "now" remains the primary reference for that process.</p> |
| <br><b>Transpersonal<br/>Holism</b>     | <p>This stratum is marked by an increasing flexibility of moral orientation. For example, the realization that more than one values hierarchy can be valid, that someone can operate within multiple values hierarchies simultaneously, or that seemingly opposing values hierarchies can synthesize a new, higher order moral orientation. This intersubjective moral ambiguity is then navigated through the discernment of intentional, strategic outcomes that benefit the largest majority possible. Definition of what constitutes "the largest majority possible" likewise changes and evolves, but is strongly informed by transpersonal perceptions and experiences. In turn, identification with this transpersonal connectedness subordinates other identifications, so that, for example, experiencing a shared ground of being is indistinguishable from compassionate affection for all beings, and compassionate affection for all beings is indistinguishable from attenuation of individual ego. The relevant timeframe for this stratum becomes contextual; the relevance of past, present and future shifts with current priorities, and the cycles and patterns of time begin to give way to a continuum.</p>   |
| <br><b>World-Centric</b>              | <p>Now there is a greater appreciation and acceptance of ecologies that facilitate, transcend and include human society. These ecologies may contain biological, metaphysical, quantum or other systems-oriented constructs, with the feature that these systems are vast, complex and interdependent. Here moral function is inspired by individual and collective commitment to understanding and supporting those systems in order to support all life. Personal identification with this broader, ecological consciousness expands humanity-centric compassion and concern into world-centric compassion and concern. Values hierarchies now begin to be viewed as a primary form of nourishment, from which all other nourishment is derived. Time dilates and slows a bit here, tending to be viewed more as cycles and patterns than a line.</p>   |
| <br><b>Principled<br/>Rationalism</b> | <p>Moral function is now defined by a rationally defined set of reasoned moral principles, principles with the unifying objective of benefiting all of humanity. For anyone operating in this stratum, empirical validation of moral efficacy is of particularly compelling interest; what really works should be embraced, and what doesn't should be discarded. There is also an additional form of individuation here, where identification with previous communities (communities whose values and goals had previously been facilitated and integrated) begins to fade, and is replaced with increasing identification with, and compassion for, all human beings. Social divisions are discarded in favor of equal status. The future can now become an all-consuming fixation that drives more and more decisions, the past becomes an advising reference, and the current moment a fleeting absorption. As a result, time tends to both constrict and accelerate in this stratum, remaining linear in experience and conception.</p>  |

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| <br><b>Cooperative Communalism</b>       | <p>Here a communal role and collective responsibility is firmly accepted and established as part of moral function, and community is defined by shared values and experiences, rather than just shared benefits or just laws. The necessity of collaborative contribution to human welfare is understood, and the desire to compete for personal advantage fades away. A community's shared values are appreciated, integrated and supported in order to further that community's goals and collective nourishment, but without the suppression or sacrificing of personal values and identity that were common in earlier tribalism. Thus distinctions of class, caste, and social position tend to attenuate. This stratum tends to invite preoccupation with the future, sometimes even beyond one's personal future, because one is charting a course through increased complexity. Time is experienced and conceived as episodic.</p>  |
| <br><b>Competitive Communalism</b>       | <p>Moral function is strongly influenced by personal acceptance of the importance of participating in a mutually beneficial and lawfully just community, while still retaining individual uniqueness. However, this initial expansion into a communal moral orientation usually orbits around competition. Competition with others for personal positional power and influence in the community; competition with other moral orientations, asserting the relevance of one's own views and priorities; non-conformance with, and continual challenging of, a community's established values hierarchy; and competition for other forms of social capital. In this stratum the future gains more importance as one strategizes navigation of these competitions. The past also regains its teaching role, with emphasis on both failures and successes to inform current strategies.</p>   |
| <br><b>Contributive Individualism</b>    | <p>Now more fully individuated from the primary tribe and its social constraints, one continues to be committed to one's own well-being, freedom, wholeness and access to more subtle, nuanced and complex nourishment resources. Moral function is increasingly defined by efforts that appear "good" or helpful to others, as framed by conscience, the context-of-the-moment and one-on-one relationships. In this sense, moral relativism is derived from one's own experiences and interactions, and tends to be maintained and defended within this self-referential absorption. The present is still paramount here. This stratum is part of an individuation process from the tribe and the tribe's values hierarchy. Moral orientation may lapse into previous strata, but is otherwise centered around a sense of obligation to one's own uniqueness, freedom, well-being and wholeness. As a result, one is open to more complex nourishment that was not available within egoic or tribal orientations. Probably as a component of emancipation from tribal expectations, there tends to be minimal concern about the impact of one's individuation process on others. In this stratum, the present once again gains preeminence; the past is being left behind, and the future matters less than assertiveness in the now.</p> |
| <br><b>Opportunistic Individualism</b> | <p>This stratum is part of an individuation process from the tribe and the tribe's values hierarchy. Moral orientation may lapse into previous strata, but is otherwise centered around a sense of obligation to one's own uniqueness, freedom, well-being and wholeness. As a result, one is open to more complex nourishment that was not available within egoic or tribal orientations. Probably as a component of emancipation from tribal expectations, there tends to be minimal concern about the impact of one's individuation process on others. In this stratum, the present once again gains preeminence; the past is being left behind, and the future matters less than assertiveness in the now.</p>  |
| <br><b>Defensive Tribalism</b>         | <p>Here the social order and internal rules of our primary social group(s) are championed as correct and proper both within the tribe (regulation) and to the outside world (proselytization). Competition with - and subjugation of - other individuals or groups outside of the tribe ( or one's class, caste or social position) becomes more pronounced. Thus moral function is defined by rigid definitions and legalistic rules (law &amp; order, right &amp; wrong, black &amp; white) that justify and secure personal standing within the tribe, as well as the tribe's standing within a given environment. Now, because one's tribal position is secure, the past again dominates. Past authorities, traditions, insights and experiences infuse the present legalistic frame with self-righteous justification.</p>   |
| <br><b>Tribal Acceptance</b>           | <p>Conformance with social expectations, and approval of one's primary social group(s), governs moral function here. What is "right" or "wrong" is defined by what increases or attenuates social capital and standing within the group(s). The acknowledged link between personal survival and tribal acceptance expands self-centeredness to tribe-centeredness, but otherwise operates similarly to lower moral strata. In this stratum, one's "tribe" tends</p>   |

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|  | to be fairly immediate, and fairly small - a family, team, group of peers, gang, etc. Now the relevant timeframe shifts back into the immediate future, where status and influence will either be lost or realized; the past may still be instructive, but what waits around the next bend in the road is what preoccupies.   |
| <br><b>Self-Protective Egoism</b> | Moral function is governed by acquisitive, manipulative, consumptive or hedonistic patterns that accumulate and defend personal gains (i.e. secure nourishment sources) in order to insulate the ego from risks and loss. This self-centeredness may be masked by primitive adaptive personas that navigate basic reciprocity, but is generally indifferent to other people except for the ability of others to satisfy personal demands. Now the past can actually become more important than the present, because the past is where wrongs were suffered and gains realized. Reflections on the present and future, on the other hand, tend to be inhabited by fear of risk and loss. |
| <br><b>Self-Assertive Egoism</b>  | The aggressive utilization of basic tools to satisfy own wants and whims, usually without regard to the impact on others, is an overwhelming moral imperative here. In most situations, this imperative is only moderated by fear of "being caught" and the personal embarrassment, punishment or loss of personal nourishment that may follow. The relevant timeframe for fulfilling one's desires expands a little here, so that gratification can be delayed until the near-future. However, the past is largely irrelevant, except as a reminder of negative consequences to be avoided.  |
| <br><b>Egoless Raw Need</b>       | Naïve, helpless state in which volition is centered around unrestrained basic nourishment in every moment, but where the mechanisms of needs fulfillment are unknown, unskilled or otherwise inaccessible. In this stratum, the scope of one's "relevant timeframe" for this needs fulfillment is almost always the immediate, everpresent <i>now</i> .   |

In applying this schema to our escape of capitalism, it seems clear that we would need to advance our collectively agreed-upon moral development to at least a Cooperative Communalism stratum as a precursor to transition. Then, in order to successfully sustain a post-capitalist political economy, our moral creativity will need to advance into a World Centric orientation. Using a simplified version of this schema, this is how the "Level 7" designation is derived (please see: "Integral Lifework Developmental Correlations" at [https://www.academia.edu/9350986/Integral\\_Lifework\\_Developmental\\_Correlations](https://www.academia.edu/9350986/Integral_Lifework_Developmental_Correlations)). For some, the moral operations of Cooperative Communalism – and even World Centricism – won't seem that great of a leap, but more of an invitation to make a slight shift of focus in their compassionate intentions and an already felt civic responsibility. For others, these moral strata may seem quite alien or out-of-reach, which is where multidimensional nourishment comes into play. For as we enter into dialogue with each aspect of our being that has been neglected or depleted over time, we will abruptly and intensely become aware of the natural inclination for reconciliation and harmony every dimension has with every other, and how compassionate affection facilitates and energizes both that inclination and holistic nourishment. This, in turn, is what stimulates moral maturity in personal motivations and social relations.

Again, though, the proof is in the practice. From my experience and observation, I do not think there is a one-size-fits-all prescription for balanced multidimensional nourishment; this is something each person must work through for themselves. But that does not mean we can't provide each other with a community of support, for there are certainly common patterns of depletion or imbalance that can be collectively addressed. For example, my wife Mollie has encountered a predictable scenario of repressed creativity during many of her

interactions with artists over the years. Someone will attend one of the artistic discussions or events that Mollie facilitates and reveal that they gave up their passion in some form of expression years ago, and only now, often late in life, are they finally returning to that soul-nurturing activity. So these prodigal artists have drifted into natural community with each other and with established professionals in order to rekindle that fire, and this eventually became the driving force behind Mollie's *Incognito Witch Project*, which seeks to revive and release this suppressed "inner magick." Such affiliative groups for recovery and ongoing self-care seemingly exist for just about every one of the thirteen dimensions of Integral Lifework, and so as an integral part of our evolution, it seems hopeful and encouraging that we can avail ourselves of them.

This, then, is our basic proposition: that as our moral maturity advances past the I/me/mine that manifests as greed and cutthroat competitiveness, and past the we/us/ours that shapes the profit motive, we will arrive at an increasingly unitive orientation where property is no longer private but common or even sacred, and our desire for the thriving of all fellow human beings and the Earth itself becomes central to all endeavors. Once this occurs, our political economy will inherently reflect these advancements. But without moral development supported by multidimensional nourishment, it will be extremely difficult to make a transition away from commercialist corporationism – especially since the current political economy strives to distract and deplete us into moral regression, so that we will consume ever more in a futile attempt to correct the imbalances, suffering and emptiness such regression creates. Therefore our imperative is to grow and learn in more dimensions than our current socioeconomic system encourages or supports, and this will require the strengths and benefits of both community and interior discipline. It will demand a new kind of self-sufficiency, and strong convictions of responsibility that are grounded in a broader, more inclusive and more interdependent awareness. But we must endeavor to move forward with a multidimensional understanding and practice, because unless individual and collective moral evolution are aroused, we have little hope of creating a sustainable political economy that heals and transcends the failures of capitalism.

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**For resources that help facilitate a five-pronged transition to a Level 7 political economy, please visit <http://www.tcollinslogan.com>. Please also feel free to forward both additional resources and requests for specific data or resources directly to me at [tcollins@integrallifework.com](mailto:tcollins@integrallifework.com).**

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