

Draft

# **SALVATION CAPITALISM: MANAGEMENT AS SACRED MISSION IN A TIME OF CRISIS**

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## **Introduction**

My graduate school teacher, French philosopher Paul Ricoeur, wrote that his life motto consisted of “aiming at the ‘good life’ with and for others, in just institutions” (1992: 172). This motto is the animating force that drives this essay: How does one live the good life, both in caring for oneself and showing solicitude for others, in organizational settings that are fair and just? I am interested in ethical life at the intersections between the personal and the public, the private and the corporate. This interest is fundamental to seeing things whole philosophy, so that my exploration here of the relationship between the good life, selfhood, and corporations functions as both an endorsement, and an immanent critique, of seeing things whole philosophy. By labeling this project an exercise in endorsement and immanent critique, my aim is to engage critically seeing things whole philosophy from a perspective that is both internal to – and at some remove from – the philosophy itself. In particular, I will query this philosophy’s adequacy to arguably the greatest institutional question of our time: Is it possible to do business today without destroying Earth’s capacity to support life as we know it? In response, I will first consider the global challenge of the environmental crisis to seeing things whole thought; then turn to a meditation on the qualities of the “kenotic leader” as essential to meeting this challenge; and finally develop a case study of Landry’s Bicycles as a model of labor and environmental leadership in light of this challenge.

My orienting question is, What would healthy and successful organizational practices look like at a time when the great masses of Earth’s human, animal, and plant populations are teetering on the brink of collapse? This question presupposes what many of us now recognize, namely, that we are living in an era of economic and environmental despair where the triple threats of hunger, poverty, and climate change continues apace. The United Nations estimates that about 25,000 people die every day of hunger or hunger-related causes due to severe, structural poverty worldwide. Even in the United States, the richest country in the history of humankind, the poverty rate for minors is the highest in the industrialized world, with nearly 15% of all minors and 30% of African American children living below the poverty threshold, according to Wikipedia. An entirely preventable disease, AIDS kills over two million people a year – making it second only to the Black Death as the largest epidemic in history. The death toll from HIV/AIDS is especially high in Africa where millions have died, leaving scores of children as orphans and destroying whole communities.

On the environmental front, the news is no better. Jim Hansen, a top climate specialist at NASA, claims we have just ten years to reduce greenhouse gases before global warming reaches an unstoppable tipping point and transforms our natural world into a “totally different planet” (Pearce 2007: xxviii). While earth’s temperature rose by one degree last century, Hansen et al. predict that global temperatures will rise by three to ten degrees this century, resulting in widespread melting of arctic glaciers and perhaps even the Greenland landmass. This mass melting could then raise sea levels, astonishingly, by one or two feet or more, causing low-lying shore communities such as the San Francisco Bay Area and lower Manhattan to gradually disappear. Indeed, the current president of the Maldives – a string of 1,190 islands in the Indian Ocean – now proposes to move 300,000 Maldivians to higher ground – India? Australia? – because of growing evidence that rising waters will soon swamp his country (Schmidle 2009). Hurricane Katrina along the Gulf Coast in 2005 is a particularly ugly example of the confluence of poverty and climate change in our era: the gradual warming of the Gulf of Mexico by one degree in recent years contributed to the conversion of a tropical storm into a killer hurricane, trapping hundreds of poor people in their homes who didn’t have the means to escape the disaster. Equally threatening, climate change is contributing to a global die-off of species similar to the last mass extinction event over 65 million years ago when the great dinosaurs were wiped out. Biologists conservatively estimate that 30,000 plant and animal species are driven to extinction every year – even the polar bear is now proposed as a threatened species.

Not everyone agrees with this dire scenario. Global warming critics chide many climatologists’ and geologists’ “undue concerns [regarding] destructive manmade global warming . . . and rampant species loss”; such concerns are generating “solutions” to climate crisis that “are unjustifiably costly and of dubious benefit” (Cornwall Declaration 2008). Nevertheless, the science seems clear (especially Speth 2004): we are living in an objectively apocalyptic situation that cries out for leaders of intelligence, compassion, and vision who can move us beyond narrow self-interest and conventional bottom-line thinking to a new model of whole human societies living sustainably within Earth community. This is a tall order, but I believe the threefold model, now strengthened in response to the global economic and environmental crisis, has the capacity to demonstrate how human beings, and the wider nonhuman world, can enjoy robust planetary well-being in our time.

### **The Triple Bottom Line: A Challenge to the Threefold Model**

Developed by what is now the seeing things whole organization, the threefold model provides a bird’s eye view of organizational life with respect to governance, vision, and financial growth. An adaptation of Swiss Reformation theologian John Calvin’s priest, prophet and king christology, the threefold model examines how the dynamics of organizational structure, animating mission, and business viability symbiotically interrelate in the life of an institution. Glossing the biological imagery that shapes the formulation of the model, institutions are living organisms that require the mutual interaction of each of these three energies in order to be productive and profitable.

What seems to me to be missing, however, is attention to *sustainability* (in organizational terms) or *creation care* (in theological terms) as a core value at the center of the model. While this value is resonant with the threefold model, it is never positioned explicitly as basic to its

fundamental articulation. By “sustainability” or “creation care” I do not mean a successful organizational model *per se*, as important as this ideal is, but the development of fiscally solid business and institutional practices that fully account for their social and environmental impacts so that future generations can meet their vital collective needs as well (Daly and Cobb 1994). Andrew Savitz, former lead partner of PricewaterhouseCoopers, puts it this way:

Sustainability respects the interdependence of living beings on one another and on their natural environment. Sustainability means operating a business in a way that causes minimal harm to living creatures and that does not deplete but rather restores and enriches the environment.

Sustainability also respects the interdependence of differing aspects of human existence. Economic growth and financial success are important and provide significant benefits to individuals and society as a whole. But other human values are also important, including family life, intellectual growth, artistic expression, and moral and spiritual development. Sustainability means operating a business so as to grow and earn profit while recognizing and supporting the economic and noneconomic aspirations of people both inside and outside the organization on whom the corporation depends

The only way to succeed in today’s interdependent world is to embrace sustainability. Doing so requires companies to identify a wide range of stakeholders to whom they may be accountable, develop open relationships with them, and find ways to work with them for mutual benefit. In the long run, this will create more profit for the company and more social, economic, and environmental prosperity for society (2006: x-xi).

Sustainability is a proleptic category that focuses on the long-term viability of working business models. In this essay, I will use this term as shorthand for economically sound environmental and social policies in corporate institutions. Sustainability – or creation care – encompasses the well-being of workers and consumers in a verdant world where all of Earth’s inhabitants are deserving of nurture and protection. It asks, How can companies today secure and manage the labor and environmental resources necessary for achieving their economic goals while also preserving the capacity of future human communities and ecosystems to survive and flourish? Native American folklore often speaks of animal and related resource management practices done with an eye toward their impact on the seventh generation to come. Products and services alone are not a true measure of value; rather, companies must calculate the real cost of doing business that relies on nature’s bounty in a world increasingly scarred by industrial and post-industrial extractions of resources. Seventh-generation full-cost business and accounting practices relocate the goal of financial profitability within the context of fair labor performance, responsible consumption of energy, careful management of waste, attention to air and water quality, compassionate labor practices, and commitment to the well-being of human society in general.

The seventh-generation ideal is also identified today as the *triple bottom line business model* (people, planet, profit). In this model, financial profits depend upon carefully managed environmental and social performance; corporate, societal, and ecological interests dynamically interact and mutually support one another. Triple bottom line business practices that measure

long-term growth as an increase in financial, natural, and social capital do not, however, simply slap ecosocial responsibility onto a capitalist model as a way of adding “social service” to its list of charitable activities. Triple bottom line – or sustainable – businesses, rather, are seeking to transform capitalism and render it inherently responsive to the exigencies of just labor laws and global climate change, to cite two examples, if it is going to be truly successful, in economic *and* ethical terms, in the competitive global marketplace (Hawken 1993; Savitz 2006).

Ironically, many organizations are now discovering that their business model is actually *strengthened* by systematic attention to their contribution to long-term human and eco-system well-being. Shifting energy use to renewables, reducing or eliminating hazardous wastes, creating products from recycled materials – these steps cut costs in the long run, improve workforce conditions, and minimize environmental impacts. And so the list of triple bottom line companies continues to grow: Toyota’s sustainable business practices and high mileage hybrid vehicles, Subway’s integral focus on healthy nutrition and civic engagement, Herman Miller’s recycling efforts and policy of paying higher prices for sustainably logged timber, and Tom’s of Maine’s environmentally-friendly products and corporate volunteerism. These pro-labor, community-outreach, green businesses did not first become profitable and then later added on to their organizational model fair labor and sound environmental practices; rather, sustainability and profitability have been integral to their identity and mission since their founding.

The threefold model literature does make occasional reference to sustainability (“Do we operate in ways that honor the human and natural communities which host us?”), but the hit-and-miss references to this value are belied by a human-centered worldview that refers to the human community as the primary stakeholder or center of value in corporate decision-making. Consider how when the threefold model literature identifies typical stakeholders, it does so, under the stewardship rubric, in terms of management and trustees; under the identity rubric, it discusses staff; and under the purpose rubric, clients and suppliers (Specht and Broholm 2005). In my judgment, “stakeholder” refers to any person, or nonhuman life-form, who is directly or indirectly shaped and determined by the actions of the firm in question. From this perspective, the primary stakeholder in any organizational enterprise is the *entire biotic and abiotic order of the natural world* – Earth’s common life-support system – without which particular organizational efforts are not possible (Wallace 2005: 81-96).

The innumerable and life-endangering environmental ills that currently plague us are the byproducts of human cultures and technologies deeply estranged from the great natural systems of the planet. These same systems are, ironically, the very processes that ultimately sustain us. Edward Wilson has calculated that humans are destroying species at an extraordinary rate and that between twenty and fifty percent of present living species will be extinct by the year 2025. The only lasting solution to counter this dynamic is to recreate consciously symbiotic relationships between humanity and nature. Such relationships demand nothing less than a fundamental technological revolution designed to integrate advanced societies with the natural world (Todd and Todd 1995: 164).

Free and open organizational cultures radically depend on diverse and vigorous natural systems for their very survival and longevity. We are “deeply estranged from the great natural systems of

the planet,” as Todd and Todd argue, and yet “[t]hese same systems are, ironically, the very processes that ultimately sustain us” (164). Positive workforce cultures where democratic decision-making is a regular feature of management and staff relations is an important step on the path to sustainability. But to make this move alone is not a full embrace of triple-bottom-line, sustainable business practice. Without clean air, potable water, healthy land-management, and biodiverse plant and animal life – and without these ecological values as front and center of a particular business model – all forms of otherwise laudatory egalitarian institutional life are baseless. The threefold model faces a crossroad, therefore, that I will call *creation-based* rather than *person-based*, to speak in theological terms. Will the threefold model remain wedded to an *anthropocentric* organizational structure that makes only passing reference to sustainability, or can it relocate itself on the *planetary* foundation of biological fecundity and the well-being of all of God’s creatures, human and nonhuman alike?

### **Kenotic Leadership: Living the Mandated Life**

Another topic that I found to be underserved in seeing things whole literature concerns *the quality of persons’ inner life* within organizational leadership theory today. In this section I will shift my focus away from the outward issue of sustainability as the core value that challenges the current formulation of the threefold model to the inward issue of the interior qualities of radical self-giving and risk-taking that defines the leadership of successful organizations. Of course, the outward/inward foci mutually depend upon and reinforce one another: an authentically sustainable business relies upon the inward character and convictions of its leadership, and in turn attention to the inner life is shaped by triple-bottom-line institutional culture.

Genuinely effective leadership in the global economy relies on a sense of sacred calling rooted in the practice of the inner life. Parker Palmer writes that “[t]he power of authentic leadership is found not in external arrangements but in the human heart. Authentic leaders in every setting – from families to nation-states – aim at liberating the heart, their own and others’, so that its powers can liberate the world.” The innermost life of the spirit – a power that “can liberate the world,” as Palmer writes – enables the manager to fulfill an ennobling mission to equip all others (human and nonhuman alike) to live lives that are productive and meaningful. Nothing less than this sense of holy purpose rooted in true inwardness – no widening profit margins or increased market share in and of itself – will provide institutional management with the interior sense of purpose and vision necessary for long-term leadership in an evolving and competitive world economy.

Let me identify this life-orientation as an exercise in “kenotic” leadership. *Kenosis* is a Greek term used throughout the New Testament to denote “self-emptying.” In Phillipians 2 Paul writes that Jesus “emptied himself [*kenosis*] and took on the role of a servant, being born in human form.” For Christians, Jesus is the paradigm of the leader who divests himself of everything he has in order to serve others. By suspending his special standing as a member of the Godhead, Jesus kenotically performs leadership-as-service by becoming human and suffering death. He gives his life as a sacrifice so that all persons, indeed all of creation, would have the opportunity to experience new life. Nothing less is required of the contemporary leader, whether her sphere of influence be business, the academy, the professions, or religious ministries. If in fact the institutional leader truly envisions her task as a sacred trust nourished by a robust inner life, then

she will risk everything – her professional reputation, her standing in the organization, her salary and pension – in order to move her colleagues and peers toward service of the greater good. “When Jesus calls a person, he bids him ‘come and die.’” Dietrich Bonhoeffer, the Lutheran theologian and martyr who joined the conspiracy to kill Hitler in 1944, wrote these words in his book *The Cost of Discipleship* (1949: 99). Bonhoeffer’s active resistance to the Nazis eventually led to his execution in the Flossenbürg concentration camp in 1945. Bonhoeffer’s membership in the conspiracy reflected his reliance on his innermost discernment of the truth – what he called *conscience* – that guided him toward subverting the Reich government in the early 1940s. He knew this was a risky proposition. On the one hand, he believed government was from God and binding on conscience; deference to the governing authorities is the proper rule for citizens of the state (Bonhoeffer 1965: 339-53). On the other, he maintained that particular times of crisis might require a person to especially heed the voice of one’s conscience – under the tutelage of the Gospel message – and thereby take the risk of “bear[ing] guilt for the sake of charity” (Bonhoeffer 1965: 245). In fidelity to conscience, one might find oneself running the risk of incurring guilt in pursuit of the responsible action in service to the neighbor. At times, one must do what appears to be the wrong thing in order to pursue a higher good. Given his theology of the divine right of government, Bonhoeffer – in living out the dictates of his conscience to join the conspiracy against Hitler – assumed the guilt of murder through disobeying the commandment of the Decalogue, “Thou shalt not kill.”

Much of the management theory I have recently read says little about the practice of conscience or inner truth-seeking as the attitudinal disposition necessary for successful leadership. An exception is Peter Senge’s *The Fifth Discipline*, which avoids the language of management formulas and techniques and focuses instead on the dimensions of character – specifically, commitment to truth, or conscience, in Bonhoeffer’s vocabulary – requisite for authentic leadership development.

Commitment to the truth often seems to people an inadequate strategy. “What do I need to do to change my behavior?” “How do I change my underlying belief?” People often want a formula, a technique, something tangible that they can apply to solve the problem of structural conflict. But, in fact, being committed to the truth is far more powerful than any technique.

Commitment to the truth does not mean seeking the “Truth,” the absolute final word or ultimate cause. Rather, it means a relentless willingness to root out the ways we limit or deceive ourselves from seeing what is, and to continually challenge our theories of why things are the way they are . . . . It also means continually deepening our understanding of the structures underlying current events (Senge 1994: 159).

The kenotic leader has the courageous faith of Father Abraham who risked everything to follow God’s command to sacrifice his son, what he knew to be the truth (so Genesis 22 for Jews and Christians, and Sura 32 in the Qu’ran for Muslims). The three Abrahamic traditions agree on this point: Abraham is a model of authentic leadership in our time because he followed the inner dictates of what he knew to be right even in the face of opposition and uncertainty. 19<sup>th</sup> century Danish philosopher Søren Kierkegaard analyzes the biblical account of Abraham’s integrity as a follower of his own inward certainty and labels Abraham a “knight of faith” who willingly took a

“leap of faith” into the truth as he discerned it: “[The leap of faith] is the finest and the most extraordinary of all; it has an elevation of which I can certainly form a conception, but no more than that. I can make the mighty trampoline leap whereby I cross over into infinity . . .” (1983: 36). No such leap would truly constitute a genuine vault into the void if the leader had all the information about the outcome of her leap at her immediate disposal. In fidelity to truth according to her own best lights, the leader takes a leap of faith where an “information gap,” as Robert Greenleaf puts it, forces her to rely on “intuition” to bridge the abyss between what she does and does not know:

As a practical matter, on most important decisions there is an information gap. There usually is an information gap between the solid information in hand and what is needed. The art of leadership rests, in part, on the ability to bridge that gap by intuition, that is, a judgment from the unconscious process. The person who is better at this than most is likely to emerge as the leader because of the ability to contribute something of great value. Others will depend on such persons to go out ahead and show the way because their judgment will be better than most. Leaders, therefore, must be more creative than most; and creativity is largely discovery, a push into the uncharted and the unknown. Every once in a while a leader needs to think like a scientist, an artist, a poet. And a leader’s thought processes may be just as fanciful as theirs – and as fallible.

Intuition is a *feel* for patterns, the ability to generalize based on what has happened previously. Wise leaders know when to bet on these intuitive leads, but they always know that they are betting on percentages. Their hunches are not seen as eternal truths (Greenleaf 1977: 23).

Barak Obama is an example of a leader who traded on his intuitional convictions, and initiated his own leap of faith, in order to serve the greater good – and did so, potentially, at great cost to himself. In March 2008 Obama did what I thought was unheard of in the midst of a tightly wound presidential primary: he frankly and openly discussed the ugly racial divide that separates many Anglos from many people of color in this country (Obama 2008). Without rancor or bitterness, but fully acknowledging the pain and distress racial prejudice foments in America, Obama discussed such difficult topics as the problems with first-generation black liberation theology and the latent racist training within his own family of origin. I was stunned: here is a biracial, African-American presidential candidate putting his political future on the line by opening again the great wound that continues to belie the promise of American exceptionalism – the wound of slavery, Jim Crow, and continuing institutional racism – the wound that will not heal. The contemporary leader committed to a larger purpose will similarly make herself vulnerable – she too will become a kenotic servant of others – in order to heal and unleash the buried liberatory energies within the wider community she cares for.

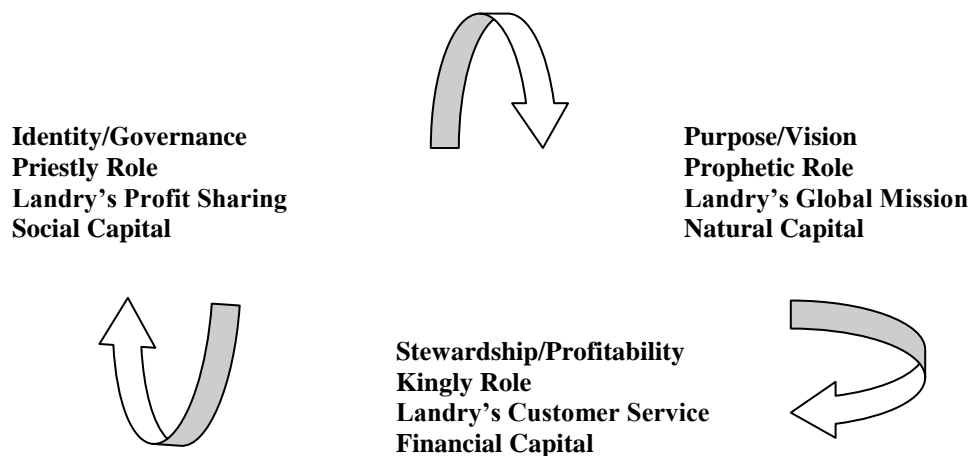
The journey *inward* toward one’s vital life-source enables the self-emptying journey *outward* toward institutional leadership in organizations committed to genuine value. Not all of us are asked to give up our lives in the same manner that Jesus and Bonhoeffer did. But all of us are asked to become daily practitioners of self-emptying – to model to others how to put into abeyance attention to private interests in order to serve the well-being of the larger societies and ecosystems we inhabit. Kenotic service, however, is not *do-goodism*, *feel-good charity*, or

*philanthropy* for its own sake. Indeed, it is not altruism as such. Rather, it is a passion for the health of the wider community, rooted in the inner certainties of the heart, that propels non-risk-averse organizations towards more humane and sustainable practices in the midst of competition, change, and uncertainty.

Successful leaders are everyday practitioners of the inner life who abandon a hierarchical model of controlling people and events in favor of a participatory model of engaging change with and for others in institutions that seek to be humanly just and environmentally sustainable. Such persons, as William O'Brien, former CEO of Hanover Insurance puts it, shoulder "an almost sacred responsibility: to create conditions that enable people to have happy and productive lives" (Senge 1990: 21). The daily maintenance of one's vital life-source – obedience to conscience, truth, and the willingness to engage the unknown – is the well-spring that animates all authentically productive and transformative thought and action in the public sphere. Knowing full well the risks attendant upon such an inner journey, the leader kenotically forges ahead with a sense of certainty and mission about the sacred calling she fulfills by seeking the well-being of the wider social and ecological orders she serves.

### Case Study of Salvation Capitalism: Landry's Bicycles

In this section I analyze Landry's Bicycles' integrated focus on profit sharing and global mission as a case study of the identity and purpose dimensions of the threefold model with special reference to triple bottom line economics. Other essays have studied the company's customer service ideal vis-à-vis the stewardship function within the threefold model (i.e., Benefiel and Hamilton 2008; "Landry's Bicycles and the Threefold Model" 2006). The accompanying graphic diagrams my perspective on the overall intersection of the threefold model, triple bottom line management theory, and Landry's Bicycles:



#### *Purpose*

It is not an overstatement to say that Landry's Bicycles, founded in 1922, is in the business to save the world. This claim sounds grandiose, but having spent a couple of days with the company's owners and conducting my own interviews and research, what I believe motivates Tom and Peter Henry is a visionary desire to better people's lives and defend the planet through

healthy, enjoyable cycling. Working between four stores and seventy-five employees in the greater Boston area, both men's sense of global mission is inextricably tied to their commitment to employee's well-being and the store's financial health. Bringing all three seeing things whole rubrics together, Landry's operates, in my judgment, with a missionary zeal to sell quality bikes at a reasonable price (purpose) with an emphasis on customer service (stewardship) and equitable, positive employee relations (identity).

With special reference to Landry's global mission (here viewed through the purpose lens), their 2008 Buyer's Guide says it best, "Bicycles are the Solution to Some of the World's Biggest Problems" ("Landry's Bicycles" 2008). The company believes that if it can persuade people to get out of their cars and onto bikes then riders can save themselves from the alarming epidemic of obesity and diabetes in developed countries like the U.S., and the planet will be protected from harmful tail-pipe emissions – the primary driver of human-induced global warming. Their motto is "Kick Gas" (<http://www.landrys.com/>). For a bike dealership, is this catch-phrase self-serving? Of course it is. But its point is that our fossil fuel economy is an addictive habit that keeps us hooked on a volatile resource that is expensive, unsustainable, and quickly disappearing. Our oil and fuel addiction is ruining our health, warping the economy, destroying the planet, and provoking international conflicts in oil rich countries (e.g., Iraq and the Caucasus). We need to move beyond carbon dependence, and using a bike helps to power down our carbon-intensive lifestyles for the well-being of everyone, ourselves included.

Why are bikes essential to human health? And how does such activity preserve the well-being of the environment that sustains life on Earth? In recent years, a new community health problem has arisen in the developed world: epidemic levels of obesity and diabetes among both adult and child populations. Many Americans are becoming overweight, and suffering from related diseases, by relying on added high-fat and high-sugar diets. The alarming rise in obesity rates is evident in body mass measurement data since the 1960s. By the year 2000, 65 percent of the adult population was overweight, and the climb in obesity among children has been even more alarming. As one study puts it, "In the 1960's approximately 5 percent of children in the U.S. were overweight. By the 1990's the percentage of overweight children had more than doubled, and currently over 15 percent of children and adolescents aged 6-19 are overweight. Even more concerning, 10 percent of preschoolers aged 2-5 are overweight" (Ohio Public Health Association on Obesity 2008).

Consider the problem of children and the obesity crisis. Socially, overweight children experience low self esteem, poor body image, and isolation from their peers. And medically, serious life-long disabilities can be caused by obesity such as diabetes and cardiovascular disease. Indeed, the surge in cases among children and teens of type 2 diabetes, a metabolic disease in which the body's natural insulin production is disordered, is particularly alarming because type 2 diabetes used to be considered an adult-onset disease. The spike in this type of diabetes is directly linked to the rise in obesity. It has now reached epidemic proportions among children and adolescents, even though it is not a congenital condition and is entirely preventable by eating a healthy diet and getting regular exercise (Caballero 2007). But the very social conditions that make balanced eating and weekly exercise part of a child's life have rotted away in many American homes. Adult caregivers feel pressured and distracted; healthy food options are limited and often expensive; and leisure time is now more devoted to sedentary media rather than outdoor games

and activities. These factors conspire to keep kids hooked on cheap, low-quality, high-fat diets of empty calories and fast food that create the false sensation of having one's hunger satisfied (Drewnowski and Specter 2004: 6-16). Obesity and attendant health problems like type 2 diabetes are the ever-growing norm among urban kids in America today.

Landry's Bicycles is a beacon of light on a landscape pockmarked with poor nutrition and exercise habits. Its mission is to inculcate among consumers the habit of everyday cycling that challenges our increasingly deskbound culture of junk diets and indifference to physical health. Of course, owning a bike does not guarantee that a person's food choices and sedentary life patterns will improve any more than membership in a health club insures regular work-out regimens for club members. But the store works hard to make cycling a fun and attractive option for persons of all ages and backgrounds. It treats every customer as an "honored guest" by making sure the cycling experience begins with a well-fitted bike tailored to the customer's body type and overall travel and recreation needs ("Landry's Bicycles" <http://www.landrys.com/>). In theological terms, Landry's practices "hospitality to the stranger" – here we can think of Abraham's welcoming of the three visitors to his tent in Genesis 18 – as basic to its core vision. Each individual shop has a fitting studio that integrates body and machine to enable riders to feel the power, control, and security that comes with a bike set up for him or her. When a person adds biking to their daily routine (or walking or running or some other cardiovascular exercise) the move towards better personal health is subtle but profound. With a solid and comfortable bike at the ready, the potential increases for a systemic shift in one's daily routine away from dependence on the automobile to a more grounded, active, nature-based, and enjoyable means of personal transportation.

Riding a bike can be basic to good fitness, but how does such activity generate "natural capital" – increasing the value and health of the environment – as well? Today's leadership challenge is to nurture successful "green" businesses that generate financial, human, and environmental capital through fair-minded management-employee programs and sustainable, low-carbon emitting relations with the natural world. Landry's Bicycles shares this green vision: long-term profitability *and* customers' physical and spiritual well-being leader in a just and verdant world. How to realize this vision is essentially a *moral* question rather than a strictly business decision or narrow political issue. Smart and sustainable business practice is an ethical commitment to the well-being of the commons that cuts across competing economic models and partisan political lines.

Take the example of Arnold Schwarzenegger in this regard. Schwarzenegger, Republican governor of California, positions himself in the "conservative conservationist" tradition of Theodore Roosevelt, who spearheaded the modern parks system, and Richard Nixon, who founded the EPA. He is opposed to drilling off the Pacific coast. He has offered large tax incentives to suppliers of alternative energy. Most controversially, he recently signed a bill to cut the state's greenhouse-gas emissions for cars and trucks 30% by 2015 along with a significant decrease of carbon content in transportation fuels. Recently, Schwarzenegger was embroiled in a protracted battle with the previous federal administration over the EPA's refusal to allow California (and twenty other states representing close to half of the nation's auto market) to implement strict tailpipe emissions standards because such standards would supposedly hurt the

U.S. economy. The EPA has sued California and California has counter-sued the EPA accordingly; both cases are still pending.

But California maintains that strong emissions guidelines will re-position the state as a world leader in developing greenhouse gas cutback technologies for cars and trucks. Conservation leadership, therefore, makes good business sense. The corporate world's single-minded focus on quarterly returns, according to Schwarzenegger, has blinded California, and the rest of the country, both to its long-term needs for energy independence and the importance of becoming a player in the booming green jobs and green industry economies worldwide. Instead of relying on old polluting fossil fuel sources to power California, the world's 7<sup>th</sup> largest economy, Schwarzenegger wants his state to become a standard-bearer in renewable energy that promotes both financial and environmental prosperity for current and future residents (Leonard 2007). I mention Schwarzenegger vis-à-vis Landry's to make the point that Landry's, like the state of California, is trying to do its part by incubating a long-term, triple bottom line business model that addresses a central moral demand: creating economically viable organizations that serve the social and environmental needs of our time. This is an extremely difficult balancing act to perform – and fair-minded people will disagree with one another on how actually to make just and sustainable institutions successful – but Landry's commitment to this transformative business model distinguishes it as a leader in corporate America.

## **Identity**

In seeing things whole philosophy, the identity dimension highlights how an organization structures its common life together; how it cares for its employees and staff; and the manner in which it distributes resources and profits. Landry's has spearheaded a variety of revenue distributing and profit sharing initiatives to stimulate economic growth and create a better labor environment in the company. In part, its goal is to generate what social scientists call "social capital" – the added value of positive and productive interhuman relations. In this vein, consider the story of Landry's mechanic José Ardon. José is a thirty-four year old immigrant from El Salvador who settled in the Boston area in 1995. At that time, he spoke marginal English and was not confident in his communication skills. He came to work at Landry's in 1996 as an entry-level bike assembler, and honed his craft, to the point that today he is one of the store's chief certified repair technicians as well as one of its "front shop" leaders. José both fixes bikes and directs the work flow through the store by greeting customers as they enter the store while he takes their repair orders. Similar to the Bangladeshi Grameen Bank microcredit program, José benefits from Landry's policy of redistributing to all mechanics 1% of labor revenue for the purchase of tools (Daley-Harris 2002). As is the case with almost all of Landry's mechanics, now he owns his own set of top quality Snap-On tools. Visiting with José in his workspace is like encountering a priest at the altar. Both venues are sacred space. José's work area is immaculately maintained and anchored by his gleaming tool chest and bike repair mount. His tools are means of transformation (read: means of grace) as he puts together broken bikes and brings them back to life. And he does so with a buoyant attitude that radiates good feeling throughout the store. José's jubilatory craftsmanship completes the circle of Landry's employees relations philosophy: Landry's has helped to nurture José as a productive member of society who controls his own means of production and, in turn, José provides Landry's with an internally motivated, skilled professional who daily increases the company's value and worth.

When an employee develops her own sense of ownership about the obligations and mission of the company she works for – when she is motivated to seek the well-being of her home institution apart from external rewards and consequences – the company discovers the “magic switch” that drives all successful enterprises. José is not a passive employee, who counts the minutes until the end of the work day, but rather what Tom Henry calls an active team member whose pride in his work product is the foundation of Landry’s governance structure. The company’s revenue redistribution program is complemented by its profit sharing policy. The bulk of Landry’s profits (around 80% to 85%) are handed out to employees with a smaller percentage (around 15% to 20%) ploughed back into the company’s infrastructure and inventory. This usually amounts to a \$30,000.00 to \$40,000.00 payout to employees along with a \$5,000.00 to \$8,000.00 return to the company’s reinvestment fund. In relation to their pay grades, all salaried employees are annually rewarded a portion of this extra tax-deferred income in order to build their retirement accounts. This tax-deferred income is offered as a match of employees’ contributions to their 401K plans. Landry’s pays 80% of individual medical plans (60% of family plans). As well, it promotes a performance-based incentives package for each store in which 5% of sales beyond a twice-weekly sales goal – plus the difference between pay budget and actual pay – goes back to employees. These various profit sharing and incentive programs create what Tom calls a “culture of recognition that celebrates achievement.” They help to turn on the “magic switch” for Landry’s so that team members have a direct sense of ownership about the current mission and future progress of the company. At its best, team members regard the company as a stewardship held in common trust, a workplace where people as people are valued, even loved (Benefiel and Hamilton 2008). Tom Henry writes about his organizational philosophy in this regard:

Seen as a whole, an organization is a living, breathing, feeling, thinking being – as capable of love and being loved as any individual person. When looked at as a living being, an organization can seem to be looking back at us as if it had a consciousness of its own. We are not masters of the organization. At best, we are stewards. Love (as a pure desire for wholeness, in oneself, in others, in the world) is the great theme of seeing things whole. Love is the underlying mystery of the threefold model. Care for the growth of the people within our organization, desire to serve the common good of our world, and stewardship of our power and money as means to good ends – these are the variations on the theme of love in the threefold model (“Landry’s Bicycles and the Threefold Model” 2006: 2).

Landry’s financial model is a *mixed economy*. It is a capitalist enterprise insofar as the means of production are owned by three individuals (Tom, Peter, and \_\_\_ Henry); it operates in a relatively open, free market environment that stimulates innovation and entrepreneurial risk-taking; and its goal is to develop and sustain long-term business viability for its employees and investors. These three “capitalist” factors – private ownership, free markets, and profit-making – are balanced, however, by the company’s “socialist” commitments to collective profit-sharing. In particular, the company rejects *laissez-faire*, Milton Friedman-style capitalism: the argument that maximizing profits at all costs is the “business of business” that trumps all other values. It champions social and environmental responsibility *as well as* long-term financial stability. Tom Henry writes

In everything we do at Landry's, we are committed to *making the world a better place*. We respect the communities we live and work in, we care for our natural and built environments, and we watch over them for the benefit of future generations . . . [and] [w]e care for our operations to ensure Landry's *long-term business viability* for the mutual benefit of our employees, customers, suppliers, and investors. Profitability isn't the only thing, but it's nevertheless a critical measure of our shared success ("Landry's Bicycles and the Threefold Model" 2006: 6).

Landry's capitalist/socialist dialectic is a move beyond the company's more egalitarian pay scale initiated in the 1980s. At that time it experimented with a flat pay scale in which all employees, owners included, received the same compensation. But Tom and Peter decided this model sapped the company of the entrepreneurial spirit that is now being generated by a structured, incentives-based pay arrangement. Tom says this recent innovation is not set in stone. But the question of compensation is an important issue for the company that bears on its long-term financial viability. The current ownership group hopes to restructure ownership of the company by eventually transferring control of the store to a new group of "in-house" investors – what Tom calls "workers-owners" – with the same drive and vision that the Henrys have sought to embody. Their goal is not to bleed the company of its assets, line their own pockets, and then leave, but rather to preserve the company's *value* – in every sense of that term – and then hand over the stewardship of Landry's to a new generation of workers-owners. How to ensure its essential culture and mission – how to balance its well-publicized attention to eco-responsibility ("Kick Gas") and social values (store management as "worker-owners") along with its focus on the financial bottom line in both short and long terms – is an extraordinary challenge Landry's Bicycles now faces in earnest.

## Challenges

Landry's is a compelling case study of seeing things whole philosophy refracted through the optics of triple bottom line thinking. In terms of its identity function, it has worked hard to model fair-minded governance and compensation practices with its staff. And in terms of its purpose function, it has sought to preserve its long-term business viability through a focus on its global mission, namely, saving the planet through cycling. Among its other civic outreach efforts, e.g., Landry's is a leader in the Bikes Belong coalition that works with local and national governments to promote public health and happiness through projects that promote bicycling (<http://www.bikesbelong.org>). But has Landry's gone far enough in confronting the challenge of doing business in a world tilting toward environmental collapse? Has Landry's systemically incorporated sustainability values in *all* of its operations, or has it, rather, made a half turn to green practices, not a full turn? Is the company essentially not a revolutionary but a reformist organization that promotes a more socially just and sustainable *form* of capitalism – capitalism with a human face, as it were – but not a radical *challenge* to the economic status quo as such?

Whether Landry's business model is adequate to the global crisis is a question I will not fully answer here. An answer to this question, however, will reflect the revolutionary versus the reformist approaches in contemporary sustainability business theory. From the revolutionary perspective, capitalism, by definition, is woefully unable to stop harm to workers and planetary destruction because it is a morally-indifferent, market-driven enterprise. Markets are profit-

oriented. Today's markets are highly sophisticated at delivering goods and services at prices that maximize shareholders' *wealth*, but they are not good at *ethically* measuring the true impact on workers and the environment of the goods and services they produce. Markets are designed to maximize owners' profits, not engage in full-cost accounting. As Paul Hawken argues, the forces that drive markets toward greater profitability for shareholders are diametrically opposed to the well-being of workers and the environment:

Businesses do not need to recognize sustainability in order to succeed. They don't have to take into account that their present demands on resources are tantamount to stealing from the future, or that selling today's wants is at the expense of tomorrow's needs. Nor does business have to acknowledge the devastating legacy of toxins and waste it is passing off to future generations. In fact, businesses are usually "better off" ignorant of these facts and principles if they intend to prosper in the present economic system . . . Thus, the commercial acts that would lead us away from runaway ecological devastation, although sound in the principles of nature, are unsound by the standards of the economy (Hawken 1993: 34).

Hawken and others (e.g., Todd and Todd 1995) call for a "restorative economy" that will "end industrialism as we know it" (Hawken 1993: 212). For these critics, capitalist economics is akin to the old Soviet system that was ideologically wedded to large-scale trampling of workers' rights and destruction of the planet for short-term rewards. Only a revolutionary response to the current crisis – only a full-scale governmental intervention into market capitalism that balances the needs of labor and the environment over and against shareholders' interests – can remake western civilization so that it is no longer at war with its mass of human inhabitants and the wider Earth itself.

Savitz takes issue with Hawken et al. by shifting the focus away from capitalism's inherent unresponsiveness to the current crisis to the flexible entrepreneurial energy within many companies to promote fair labor and conservation practices. In the long run (and here we need only reference the U.S. auto industry as exhibit A), corporations must become self-consciously sustainable – in both economic *and* environmental terms – or they will lose market share and eventually die. Savitz would agree with Hawken that capitalism's mantra is "the business of business is business," but he would emphasize, in reformist rather than revolutionary terms, that the profit motive *itself* is propelling many institutions toward better labor relations and sustainability efforts because such moves improve the company's bottom line. Sustainability, in short, is good business. Without direct government regulatory efforts,

[c]ountless corporations have voluntarily improved their environmental performance for financial reasons . . . many companies have also found ways to invest in workers, consumers, or the community that provide excellent financial returns. So even in a world of short-term profit maximizers, companies may behave responsibly, and often do.

The cynics say that these changes have come at the margins, that they have not gone nearly far enough to save the world. This is true, but we see reason to be hopeful in the fact that business leaders are now realizing that many more forms of corporate

responsibility can help maximize profits and minimize risk in the long run. And as that idea takes hold, more dramatic, positive changes are in store (Savitz 2006: 94).

A great advantage of seeing things whole philosophy is that it allows for an overarching perspective on institutional performance that opens up opportunities for genuine conversation and self-criticism. It sets free a holistic evaluation of organizations, with their struggles and their promise held in tension. By my count, Landry's has submitted itself to more than a dozen evaluation and critique sessions sponsored by the seeing things organization in which Landry's management team has continued to revise and strengthen its responsibilities to employees' well-being and care of creation. Reflecting back on this process, Benefiel and Hamilton write:

In the case of SeeingThingsWhole and Landry's Bicycles, the spiritual roots of both organizations were woven in to an action-oriented process. Through reflection and contemplation, this has created an ongoing transformation for Landry's Bicycles for over a decade . . . . This method created change in both a senior executive and an executive team that served to strengthen the company culture. Ultimately, the intervention has created a positive sustained change of family spirit and love in this company. In both cases, cooperative inquiry engaged employees, resulted in positive organizational change, and created knowledge that could be used by the companies in the future (Benefiel and Hamilton 2008: 157-58).

Whether capitalism needs systemic overall (Hawken) or reformation from within (Savitz) in order to become sustainable is an important question that can be approached but not fully answered here. But whether Landry's threefold model has fully coordinated its financial, social, and ecological interests is a question best answered by attending to the pain-staking, self-evaluation process that animates Landry's culture – a mixed economic culture that seeks to realize profitability and sustainability as flip sides of the same coin.

## **Conclusion**

“We are on the precipice of climate system tipping points beyond which there is no redemption,” writes Jim Hansen, director of the NASA Goddard Institute for Space Studies, in 2003 (Pearce 2007: xxviii). As we reach these catastrophic tipping points, what will human existence on our planet look like in ten to twenty years from now? In spite of the debate by some about the causes of climate change, climatologists agree that the prospects for human well-being on Earth are bleak. Most likely, chronic heat waves will provoke megadroughts and render daily life unbearable at times; Arctic permafrost and sea ice will crack and disappear causing islands and shorelines to shrink and vanish; continued carbon dumping will render the world's oceans more acidic and ultimately lethal to coral reefs and fish stocks; melting permafrost in Siberia and elsewhere will release huge amounts of methane into the atmosphere resulting in killer hurricanes and tsunamis; biodiverse ecosystems will collapse and produce dead monocultures of invasive species where the basic dynamic of plant pollination itself is undermined; and a hotter and less forgiving planet will cause crop failures and large stretches of arable land to become desert, mosquito-borne diseases such as dengue fever and malaria to reach epidemic proportions, and mass migrations of tens of millions of people as rising sea levels destroy homes and communities. In the near future we will look back at greenhouse gas-induced events such as the European heat wave of 2003 that killed 30,000 people – or Hurricane Katrina in 2005, the costliest natural disaster in U.S. history that killed 1,800 people – as tell-tale portends of the

coming storm. We will remember other positive environmental changes – the banning of DDT in the U.S. in the 1960s, the general eradication of ozone-depleting CFC's in the 1980s – and then wonder why we were not able to extricate ourselves from the Big Oil economy that was even then destroying the planet. In 2015, 2020 or 2025, we will likely rue the day we allowed global warming deniers to confuse the public into thinking that current climate change is a natural cycle. We will recall the definitive reports by the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment in 2005, and the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change in 2007, based on tens of thousands of studies by hundreds of climate researchers over many years of investigation, that made clear to us that our fossil fuel economy is the most important factor driving the dangerous climate changes we now see all around us.

With an alarming sense of urgency, we will have known then, even as we know now, that it is time to act.

Every generation, to borrow Thomas Berry's phrase, has its "great work." Every generation has an overarching sense of responsibility for the welfare of the whole that gathers together people and societies across their cultural and ideological differences. Many of the great social movements in this country's history – the abolitionist groundswell of the 19th century, the suffragist associations of the early 20th century, and, most notably in recent history, the civil rights movement in the 1950s and 1960s – were energized by prophetic leaders who brought together their inner obligation to the truth and their public passion for justice to animate a moral force for change more powerful than any other force to stop them. In this generation, our ennobling work will be to fight environmental degradation by reenvisioning our relationship to Earth not as exploiters but as biotic kinspeople with the myriad life-forms that populate the soil, water, and sky of our common home. This is the sustainability mandate of our time. As Berry writes,

The Great Work before us, the task of moving modern industrial civilization from its present devastating influence on the Earth to a more benign mode of presence, is not a role that we have chosen. It is a role given to us, beyond any consultation with ourselves. We did not choose. We were chosen by some power beyond ourselves for this historical task. We did not choose the moment of our birth, who our parents will be, our particular culture or the historical moment when we will be born. We do not choose the status of spiritual insight or political or economic conditions that will be the context of our lives. We are, as it were, thrown into existence with a challenge and a role that is beyond any personal choice. The nobility of our lives, however, depends upon the manner in which we come to understand and fulfill our assigned role (Berry 1999: 7).

Will we be able to seize this moment and nurture new modes of existence so that this and future generations can live richer and more productive lives? A first step will be to wean ourselves off unsustainable coal, oil, and natural gas supplies in order to save the planet. A second will be to imagine and build viable institutions that are financially sound, protective of the natural world, and enriching and meaningful for families and wage earners alike. In our time, the mission of seeing things whole should focus on promoting *economically* and, now I am suggesting, *environmentally* sustainable organizations that coordinate the values of social capital, financial

stability, and planetary health. I know from working with college students that most young people want to live for something greater than themselves, to align their lives with a sacred purpose that gives meaning to their daily commitments and obligations. With the current economic downturn, it appears the wheels of history have turned again: the era of unfettered capitalism is over – the time has passed when maximizing shareholder value as the supreme good is all that matters. Today’s sustainable businesses look instead to a higher calling: to produce and market goods and services that include the interests of *all* stakeholders – and not just corporate shareholders – for the good of human flourishing and the welfare of the biosphere. This is our great work. This is the challenge of our generation. This is our sacred mission. The threefold model – now refracted through the lens of triple bottom line economics – can help us to achieve this goal, and with this ideal as our lodestar, we will be empowered to seek and enhance genuine institutional viability, the public good, and the welfare of our planet home.

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