

The Nature of True Freedom II: Harmony of Interests

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It is our human intelligence and our human courage which is on trial; it is incredible that men who have brought the technique of physical discovery, invention and use to such a pitch of perfection will abdicate in the face of the infinitely more important human problem. What stands in the way (of a planned economy) is a lot of outworn traditions, moth-eaten slogans and catchwords that do substitute duty for thought, as well as our entrenched predatory self-interest. We shall only make a real beginning in intelligent thought when we cease mouthing platitudes. Just as soon as we begin to use the knowledge and skills we have, to control social consequences in the interest of a shared, abundant and secured life, we shall cease to complain of the backwardness of our social knowledge.

-John Dewey, *Philosophy and Civilization* (1931, p. 329).

How does a society achieve true freedom? Obviously, many perspectives have been offered over several centuries coming from political theorists, economic theorists, sociologists, anthropologists, psychologists, psychoanalysts and a whole host of philosophers. I offered a fundamentally political perspective in the first essay of this series on true freedom. I wrote about the balance between individual rights and collective responsibility, offering several tools (especially polarity management) that can help a society achieve this balance. In this second essay, I provide a more economic and commerce-based perspective, suggesting that true freedom might reside in something called the “harmony of interests.” As in the first essay, I offer not only a description of harmony of interest, but some ideas regarding how this perspective might be engaged in 21st Century America.

Adam Smith and the Harmony of Laissez-Faire

This harmony of interest perspective is often attributed to the initial observations made by Adam Smith (2003), the father of modern economics. In addressing the emerging challenges of an emerging commercial economy, Smith recognized that new principles (“mercantalism”) must be in place to regulate new 17th Century enterprises that were operating in different ways from those of previous European societies. It was not just a matter of new goods and services being produced in the European communities being analyzed by Smith, it was an even more fundamental shift in the way goods and services were being produced and exchanged.

Market and Social Exchange

To bring a contemporary perspective to the observations made and conclusions reached by Smith, I will be turning to a framework offered recently by behavioral economists (e.g. Kahneman, 2011). We can identify the shift observed by Smith to be one in which a *social exchange* mentality has shifted to a *market exchange* mentality among Smith’s emerging commercial enterprises. Goods and services were purchased (paid for) rather than being offered informally in exchange for other goods and services. If someone living in one of Smith’s European communities wanted to purchase a loaf of bread or new chair, then they would have to provide the purveyor of the bread or chair with money that had been earned (as wages) by the purchaser of the bread or chair. While the loaf of bread usually was produced

(baked) locally, the chair might have been built (manufactured) quite a few miles away at a factory that produced many chairs of the same design (mass production).

By contrast, the pre-17th Century enterprises operated in a premodern manner. *Social exchange* operated in premodern societies. Everyone in the premodern community knew one another and provided goods and services through a process that was embedded deeply in a shared set of values and a multi-generational foundation of trust. Commercial enterprises were based on local, informal exchange of goods and services on demand—often engaged through bartering processes (Bergquist, 1993)).

Specialization and Interdependence

For Smith, it was not only a matter of shift from social to market exchange, there was also a shift to more specialized functions. The purveyor of bread often produced only baked goods and the manufacturer of chairs often specialized in chairs (and other pieces of furniture). By contrast, the premodern farmer grew many different crops and tended many different animals that soon became the basic ingredients for diverse meals prepared in the kitchen of the farm. A meat stew was being prepared while the bread was baked in the oven. A pot of baked beans was warming on the wood-burning stove to be served a bit later with the newly baked bread. Chairs were either home-built or acquired from a local all-purpose craftsman in exchange for grain or perhaps some of the baked bread.

A premodern economy required diversity in the operation of a viable farm—especially important given the unpredictable character of Mother nature. A modern economy was based, instead, on specialization and economy of scale—especially important given the increasingly complex world of modern commerce and market exchange. In a premodern society, one learned how to do many things well as a viable means of survival. In a modern society, one learned to do one thing very well and to repeatedly engage this one enterprise as a viable means of economic security (and ultimately survival).

With the increased specialization of production and services in the modern society, Smith proposed that members of a society were becoming increasingly dependent on one another and that they “naturally” trade with one another to get what they need and want. Both party to an exchange of products or services must “gain” from this exchange. There must, in other words, be a “harmony of interests” among the parties involved in all market exchanges. This harmony, in turn, requires that all parties operate in a rational manner dictated by their balanced self-interests. This “laissez-faire” perspective often leads to a call for minimal government interferences and to the assumption that true freedom requires maximum freedom for each member of society. I would suggest that this perspective leads to a societal imbalance with individual rights taking precedence (with destructive outcomes) over collective responsibility.

The Anvil of Anonymous

Then along came a keen social and economic observer of the mid-19th Century who is only known as “Anonymous” (1849). Offering a detailed description and set of numbers and statistics regarding commercial operations (especially agricultural and manufacturing) in the United States, Anonymous wrote of the anvil provided by government in mid-century America to protect the harmony of interest between those wielding the plow (agriculture) and those running the looms (manufacturing) in mid-century America.

Specialization and Consumption

Beginning with the observation of modern-day specialization offered by Adam Smith, Anonymous noted that there is diversification of functions in modern American society, leading to interdependency. Farmers can produce their own cloth and clothing, but it is far more efficient in terms of time taken (labor) and cost of materials, for the cloth to be produced by those working in a mill. Similarly, a mill worker can grow their own crops, but it requires much less labor (and the quality is likely to be higher) if the knowledgeable farmer grows the crops. (Anonymous, 1849, vol II, p. 9) Anonymous identifies this as “a natural tendency to have the producer of iron and cloth, and hats, to take his place by the side of the producer of food and wool.” (Anonymous, 1849, vol II, p. 11) Compelled by the move to specialization: “The first and great desire of man is that of association with his fellow-man, and it is so, because he feels that improvement of his condition, physical, moral, mental and political is its uniform accompaniment.” (Anonymous, 1849, vol II, p. 10)

At an even deeper level, we discover from Anonymous that the link between profit and consumption is critical: “Every producer is a consumer to the whole extent of his production, and by enabling these poor people to produce more, the planter [farmer] makes a market on the land for the products of the land, to the extent of the whole excess of production. The more there is produced, the more *must* be consumed.” (Anonymous, 1849, vol II, pp. 2-3). Thus, we find the foundation of a move from premodern emphasis on consuming that which is produced, to a modern emphasis on increasing consumption (via marketing) so that more can be produced (Bergquist, 1993).

Protection and Integration

The compelling desire to associate with other people resides at the heart of a harmony of interests. It operates as if it were natural law (according to Smith and Anonymous). However, this desire can be quite fragile. As it operates in human society, natural law is often elusive, and its dictates often are ignored in the face of demands for profit in modern commerce. Protection is needed:

Throughout the country [USA], there is a want of combination. Men are perpetually fling from each other, scattering themselves over large surfaces, and wasting the labour that if saved would make them rich. This inability to combine their exertions is the result of artificial causes; and the adoption of the protective system has been produced by an instinctive effort to obtain by its aid that which, had these causes not existed, would have come naturally and without effort. (Anonymous, 1849, vol II, p. 10)

Protection requires a valuing of all forms of labor (Anonymous, 1849, vol II, p. 24). As Anonymous notes: “To induce man to labour, he must feel confident of obtaining an equivalent; and the larger that equivalent, the stronger will be the inducement to exertion.” (Anonymous, 1849, vol II, p. 25). Given the history of slavery in the United States, and the wage slavery to be found in various enterprises in 19th Century America (such as the New England mills) (Sun and Bergquist, 2021), it is not surprising that Anonymous identifies a lack of full response—a lack of equivalence—for all forms of labor (especially manual labor) at this point in American history.

The lack of an equivalent inducement is even more challenging as those doing labor (individually and collectively) begin to ask for something more than just wages. Concerns about job security and workplace safety begin to emerge later in the 19th Century as expanded requirements of “equivalent”

reward for the labor being offered. Harmony of interest is not easily attained or maintained without this expanded equivalence. Protection is required.

With this larger requirement as a sign of the valuing and protection of labor comes the need for what is often identified as “integrative” services in an organization (Lawrence and Lorsch, 1967). Someone must ensure that labor is being protected and that the interests of those profiting from ownership and management of the organization or community are integrated with and balanced off by the interests of those doing labor in the organization. What about job security, fair wages and a nontoxic work environment?

The Expanding Role of HRD

In contemporary organizations the protective integration is engaged typically through a human resources development (HRD) department and takes the form of managing and monitoring equitable hiring and promotion practices, as well as employee training and development, new employee orientation and retirement planning (HRD oversees the so-called “employee life cycle”). HRD often assumes responsibility for administration of compensation plans (including profit-sharing) and health care plans (including employee assistance programs). The protective, integrative services of HRD might also include policy enforcement (regarding such matters as equitable and nondiscriminatory treatment of employees and prevention of harassment). I have consulted with many organizations where members of the human resources department are primarily playing the role of “policy police” (often to the detriment of the more positive roles they are asked to play).

Other integrative functions are served by the mid-level managers of the organization, as well as by those providing such diverse services as inhouse employee communications, coordination of volunteer community services, and support for non-work-related activities (such as company celebrations, recreational activities, and special interest groups). I recently worked with one high tech organization that surveyed its employees only to find that they were most interested in receiving instruction in wood working! Increasingly, we find that workplace “wellness” and the creation of high morale and high productivity work environments are being promoting—with organizations vying to be identified as “the best place to work.”

Concerns about quality of interpersonal relations in the workplace and meaningfulness of work are being added to the traditional list of employee interests (such as the forementioned concerns about job security, fair wages, and nonhazardous work environments) (Bergquist, 1993). With governments in many societies requiring that traditional employee interests are being honored in organizations, we are finding that the often undesired role of HR as policy police is becoming that much more prevalent. HRD personnel no longer formulate equitable policies. They now are in the business primarily of ensuring that government-dictated policies are being enforced.

We find that there is generally a tendency for the percent of integrative services to expand significantly as compared to the percent of direct services being provided in an organization (as well as a community) as it grows in size and age (Lawrence and Lorsch, 1967; Bergquist, 1993). Direct services would include production of goods and delivery of services to customers or citizens, while integrative (indirect) services include all forms of management as well as operations needed for coordination of direct services and those I have already identified as required for the protection of employee interests. We find that large organizations (such as IBM) and large metropolitan regions (such as New York City)

operate with a particularly high percent of integrative services. This often means that large organizations must dominate and control the sector in which they are operating (usually through monopolies). Large cities become dependent on (and must ultimately control) outside resources. Even in the mid-19th Century, Anonymous observed that cities such as New York and Philadelphia “are built up out of the spoils of the farmer and planter.” (Anonymous, 1849, vol II, p. 103).

In sum, the challenge of providing protection as a means to establish and maintain harmony of interest requires the attention and energy of a large percent of those working in management systems and, more recently, HRD systems. Providing “integration”, these members of an organization serve as a buffer between those owning the business or serving in a leadership position and those doing labor in this organization. While managers are hired to do the bidding of ownership, they also (under the best of circumstances) are expected to support and protect from abuse those whom they supervise.

Thus, in modern organizations, the harmony of interest is often assigned (with considerable contradiction and tension) to the mid-managers and others providing integrative services (such as HRD practitioners). This integration is strained as the organization grows larger and older, with those at the top of the organization having less direct contact with those at lower levels of the organization—and as a result are less likely to fully appreciate the interests held by these providing the direct services of the organization. Protective services must be installed and expanded—especially in large and old organizations (and communities).

Invitation to the Table

There is an even greater challenge, as the organization not only grows larger but also as the interests of those employed in the organization become more diverse. Greater integration and protection are needed because of the inevitable friction that exists among the various members of the organization who are sitting at the table where diverse interests are being addressed. As far back as the mid-19th Century, Anonymous observed that: “The discords so frequently existing between the employer and the employed, the capitalist and the labourer, the banker and his customers, may all, as I think, be traced to one and the same cause, and if that can be removed, harmony and good feeling may be restored and maintained.” (Anonymous, 1849, vol II, p. 1). This cause has to do primarily with the profit motive. Anonymous is optimistic that the profit-related discords can be resolved, believing that the inherent natural proclivity toward interdependence provides the glue leading to a harmony of interests. Through recognition of the interdependency, harmony of interests can be found among those sitting at the table.

This optimism might not always be warranted, given the enduring push toward profitability, along with the expanded list of interests that I have already identified. Furthermore, there are several fundamental questions that has not yet been addressed. Is everyone invited to the table? Specially, who is invited to the table? Only representatives of the labor union? Only those from HR who are serving as policy police? What about those not invited to the table? Where is the harmony for them? Those not at the table have often been ignored by those observing the workplace in America during the past two centuries.

Following the lead of better-known observers, such as Charles Dickens, Anonymous often writes in glowing terms of the quality of work, the thriving of those working in the mills, and the accompanying financial success of the mid-19th Century New England mill owner. (Anonymous, 1849, vol II, p. 6). Yet the working conditions of those running the looms was horrendous. The Mill Girls and other working in the mills found few invitations to the table. They had little to say regarding their own working conditions

or even the conditions of their residency in the nearby dormitories (Sun and Bergquist, 2021). Furthermore, the amount these Mill Girls paid for meals and lodging in the dormitories was often less than the amount they earned working in the mill. Thus, their debt grew, leaving them with no freedom to leave their exhausting and unhealthy job in the New England mills. For these women there was nothing but wage slavery—as is often case in production facilities found throughout the world during the past two centuries (Chomsky, 2008).

Diversity of Products/Services and Invitation to the Table

While Anonymous was often quite optimistic, this social observer was well aware of ways that the natural laws of interdependence can fall short. Cautionary notes were offered by Anonymous. The role played by protection speaks to this need for caution. Furthermore, the challenge of harmony is extended by Anonymous well beyond United States boundaries. Anonymous notes “the ruin of the people of Ireland” (Anonymous, 1849, vol. II, p. 18) which is related to the potato famine that devastated Ireland through the mid-19th Century and led to the immigration of many Irish to North America—and to work in the New England mills that Anonymous extolls.

The Irish leaders were not invited to the table of 19th Century international commerce and did not benefit from the diversity of production that Anonymous identifies as critical to a harmony of interest. The Irish people were relying on one product (potatoes) based in agriculture—with no thriving industry as an effective exchange mechanism. Instead, we find the exchange many miles away (in New England mills) and far from being equitable and of mutual interest for those Irish immigrants working in the mills (Sun and Bergquist, 2021).

As Anonymous noted, the leaders of a country should “put not too many eggs in one basket.” (Anonymous, 1849, vol II, p. 58)—and a diversified basket requires collaboration among entities within a country and between countries. To bring about this diversification, Anonymous focuses on societal structures that are themselves quite diverse. They range from transportation systems and public policies that influence migration patterns to quality of land for raising crops and quality of machinery for producing goods, Anonymous’ harmony of interest requires diversification of enterprise—and this diversification ultimately requires diversity at the table.

There was neither harmony of interest between the Irish people and those sitting at the international market exchange, nor harmony of interest among those running the looms in New England mills and those (like the Cabots and Lowells who owned the mills). We might (with Anonymous) similarly identify the absence of citizens of other countries (such as India and most of Africa), who were subject to colonization by powerful European leaders of commerce and politics. Anonymous writes of the “ruin” of manufacturing in India, (Anonymous, 1849, vol II, p. 19) as well as in the West Indies and even Canada (all under British control). (Anonymous, 1849, vol II, p. 20). Even mid-19th Century Russia and Germany do not escape Anonymous’ assessment of dysfunction and lack of harmony (Anonymous, 1849, vol II, p. 89). England is constantly to be found in Anonymous’ critical analysis (especially in comparisons drawn with apparently harmony of interest in the United States).

Anonymous notes that “colonization is urged on all hands, and All unit in the effort to force emigration in the direction need to raise up “colonies of customers.” This strategy was not only shown by Anonymous to be unrealistic, but also to be a source of the disharmony that existed between the colonists and those subject to colonial rule. While Anonymous was not acquainted with the Behavioral

Economist 21st Century concern regarding who is invited to the table (thus sustaining the critique offered by Marx and most other liberal social observers), this keen observer was fully aware of the destructive impact of an unfair distribution of economic power and control between 19th Century nations.

Lingering Influence

While the identity of Anonymous was never determined, the perspectives offered by this person continued to gain some purchase in American society. Harmony of interest informed the policies formulated by two American presidents who were related to one another: Theodore Roosevelt and Franklin Roosevelt. For both leaders, government was to play an important corrective and protective force in sustaining a harmony of interest. Smith's laissez-faire perspective was to be tempered by selective, but critical, governmental regulations. Without this protection, massive monopolies (such as Standard Oil) would trample any real harmony of interest among all members of a modern society.

What would be the natural tendencies of today in the third decade of the 21st Century – or even the last half of the 20th Century? Are Anonymous' farmers and manufactures of iron still in need of one another and do they still, as a result, find a "harmony of interest" in working together and consuming each other's labor and products? What about the new people at the table – or those who are still not invited to the table? With increased diversity in the populations of many countries (such as those in Europe and North America) as a result of either voluntary or imposed migration, is it not much harder to find a shared set of values and perspectives that provide the foundation for a mutuality of interests?

In many societies, the premodern is still dominant. And with this premodern comes the strong hold of tribalism and strong family ties. While this allows for a mutuality of interests within these small, isolated cultural islands, it also makes the building of a broader base of mutuality much more difficult. As Malcolm Gladwell (2002) has noted, we human beings typically can only really get to know and relate to about 150 people at any one time. Everyone else is in some sense an alienate with whom it is hard to share a mutuality of interests.

This suggests that in some ways we are all still living in a tribal and family based premodern world. We only want to believe that we have moved beyond the premodern (though some of us probably yearn nostalgically for a fanciful premodern life). Even though we might all be a bit tribally oriented, nations such as Afghanistan and many African countries are particularly likely to find it hard to establish a strong national identity given the familial and tribal dominance in their societies. Countries that were created artificially, with national boundaries being established in an arbitrary manner (such as Iraq) and often by colonial powers (such as many African countries) are also likely to find the identification of a mutuality of interests difficult to challenging.

Perhaps there is something to learn from what has occurred in Eastern Europe as its citizens move past the artificial imposition of a new, very large state structure (the Soviet Union) on their own lives. While the European societies have long moved past a premodern status, they still have important remnants of premodern boundaries and loyalties. In my own work in Estonia, I found that initial concerns were soon put to rest regarding the boundaries that existed between Estonian farms prior to the Soviet confiscation of the farms. While the new Secretary of Agriculture in Estonia shared with me her fears that the old boundaries could not be identified and restored, she told me several months later that the location of these boundaries were still vividly in the memory of her Estonian colleagues: "This corner of

Mikk's farm begins at this large stone and extends out to that old oak tree by the pond . . . " The old world of local loyalties and shared interests remained intact. What then about a broader mutuality post-Soviet occupation?

Harmony, Morality and the Inner Voice

In the study I conducted with my colleague, Berne Weiss, during our work in Eastern Europe during the years when the Soviet Union was collapsing (Bergquist, and Weiss, 1994), considerable attention was given to the ways in which the citizens of two countries (Estonia and Hungary) were addressing the challenges associated with their new-found freedom. At the heart of their confrontation of this new freedom was the choice between escaping from the burdens associated with this new freedom and finding liberation in the range of options now available. In the midst of this choice between escape and liberation was the question of mutuality. Can liberated citizens of Estonia or Hungary move forward together with shared interests, or is the new freedom to be engaged (as in many Western societies) through individual actions? Must the imposed collectivism of the Soviet regime be replaced by the individualism of the Western world or is there another option—a mutuality of interests?

My colleague, Berne Weiss, became intrigued with this question of mutuality—and in particular with the notion of an inner voice as central to the notion of mutuality in the midst of new-found freedom. Her interviews with Vaclav Brichacek, Jiri Hoskovec, and Mirek Juno in Prague were particularly insightful in this regard. She found that freedom becomes a function of the individual "listening to the inner voice," as Professor Brichacek described it. A mutuality of interests can only be established if there is a shared version of the truth. The question then becomes: who owns the truth? Weiss' three interviewees all indicated that each individual does have access to the truth internally, regardless of the press, the state's relationship with the press, or the degree of information technology at his or her disposal. With this foundation of shared truth comes the opportunity for finding mutual interests.

Moral Man and Immoral Society

In returning to the insights offered by Berne Weiss and her Hungarian colleagues, I am reminded of the analysis offered by the theologian, Reinhold Niebuhr, who wrote about "Moral Man and Immoral Society." For Niebuhr, individual citizens maintain the morality of their society—the "inner voice" identified by Brichacek. The collective will compromise, distort and neglect. It is the individual, person who hold firm with the fundamental values of their society. Collectively, the voice of individual morality must be assembled—as Anonymous suggests—to protect the interests of all citizens. Cutting right to the chase in *Moral Man and Immoral Society*, Niebuhr immediately offered his basic premise on the first page of his introduction (Niebuhr, 1932, p. xxvii):

Individual men may be moral in the sense that they are able to consider interests other than their own in determining problems of conduct, and are capable, on occasion, of preferring the advantages of others to their own. They are endowed by nature with a measure of sympathy and consideration for their kind, the breadth of which may be extended by an astute social pedagogy. Their rational faculty prompts them to a sense of justice which educational discipline may refine and purge of egoistic elements until they are able to view a social situation, in which

their own interests are involved, with a fair measure of objectivity. But all these achievements are more difficult, if not impossible, for human societies and social groups. In every human group there is less reason to guide and to check impulse, less capacity for self-transcendence, less ability to comprehend the needs of others and therefore more unrestrained egoism than the individuals, who compose the group, reveal in their personal relationships.

At this point, Niebuhr echoes the concerns offered a century earlier by Anonymous, while adding the more psychological perspective to be found in mid-20th Century America:

The inferiority of the morality of groups to that of individuals is due in part to the difficulty of establishing a rational social force which is powerful enough to cope with the natural impulses by which society achieves its cohesion; but in part it is merely the revelation of a collective egoism, compounded of the egoistic impulses of individuals, which achieve a more vivid expression and a more cumulative effect when they are united in a common impulse than when they express themselves separately and discreetly.

Elsewhere, Niebuhr puts it this way: “Man's capacity for justice makes democracy possible, but man's inclination to injustice makes democracy necessary. . . . The perils of uncontrolled power are perennial reminders of the virtues of a democratic society; particularly if a society should become inclined to impatience with the dangers of freedom and should be tempted to choose the advantages of coerced unity at the price of freedom.” (Niebuhr, 1986, pp. 160-161) It is the individual moral person (with the inner voice) who can conceive of justice (and mutuality of interests) and holds a vision of true freedom, but it is the assembled morality of the society via democracy that must ensure (protect) this justice and “the dangers of freedom”.

I offer another quote from Reinhold Niebuhr (1932, p. 33) that brings the connection between protection (harmony of interest) and true freedom. He is once again echoing Anonymous' cautionary notes regarding rampant laissez-faire commerce that had been extolled by Adam Smith:

When economic power desires to be left alone it uses the philosophy of laissez faire to discourage political restraint upon economic freedom. When it wants to make use of the police power of the state to subdue rebellions and discontent in the ranks of its helots, it justifies the use of political coercion and the resulting suppression of liberties by insisting that peace is more precious than freedom and that its only desire is social peace.

The challenge thus becomes how this privately held morality is brought together in a collective (mutual) demand that the society (via Democracy) embrace and engage this moral stance. We find such a process operating in the work done by people of morality such as Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Rosa Parks, and Nelson Mandela. Even closer to home for me (as a resident of Maine) is Margaret Chase Smith, who was not only the first woman in the US Senate but was also the first member of the senate to speak out against her fellow senator, Joseph McCarthy, who was a hate and fear monger of the 1950s. For Smith and the other “heroes” I have identified, the acts of morality-based courage (to coin the term used by John Kennedy) not only modeled what other citizens could emulate, but also brought

about a collective (mutual) perspective on the moral stance to be taken and resultant actions to be engaged.

Truth and the Inner Voice

In the age of information, it is important not to confuse information with truth. Even more importantly, if a society is to achieve and sustain a harmony of interests, then this harmony must be based on a shared sense of what is real and what is the impact of one another' behavior on the overall harmony of one' society. Harmony requires truth. Information is ephemeral: events accumulate, cast ever-changing perspectives on motivations, intentions, meanings. If truth is not about accurate information, what is it? And again, what is the relationship of truth to freedom and harmony? If truth is about each individual inner voice, then perhaps the whole is like a mosaic, no one piece of which contains the whole but each piece of which contributes to making the whole complete. The key question then becomes, can harmony be found in a mosaic. If Adam Smith is correct in asserting that harmony of interest requires rationality, then must there be some shared, reason-based criteria of truth.

Obviously, the mosaic yields diversity—which is an inherent strength in building a sustainable society with true freedom. Some of the inner voices in a mosaic speak of complex meta values; some inner voices are askers of questions, some are seekers of power or wealth, some are harmonizers with the natural world; some inner voices are musical notes, some poetry, some color; some are passionate with love, some are passionate with hate; some feel called to commit genocide and build museums to house the relics of extinct cultures. Collectively, they constitute the range of possible ways of being human. Can harmony of interest arise from this human condition?

Between the choir of inner voices and the norms established in a society is the mediating role of the state. This is where Anonymous joins the conversation, suggesting the need for protection if harmony of interest is to be sustained. How the state can discourage such a private relationship is all too evident, and the Communist societies are cases in point. Mirek Juno said that having lived in a Communist society, seeing people capitulate to ideology, gave him some understanding of how the Germans became Nazis. Obviously, most states don't offer much encouragement to the individual to attend to the inner voice, the belief being that doing so would be antithetical to the continued exercise of the power of the state. Individual thinking has always led to questioning authority—and disrupting at least one form of societal harmony.

The Collaborative Voice and Reform

However, one possible inner voice, one that perhaps is dismissed because it doesn't fit the prevailing image of individualistic thinking, offers a different perspective on societal harmony. This is a voice that strives toward relationship, the builder of the web, also the compromiser. Two people in Hungary, who were dissidents, told a story about a doctor who decided that his mission in life was to bring the values and experiences of scouting (relationship with nature, culture, personal relationships, and so on) into the Pioneer youth movement of the communist system. So, he joined the Communist party and became an important person in the Pioneer movement. His position also gave him advantages in his career, but the couple who knew him saw his motivation as essentially related to a true calling.

Those who want to make a positive contribution within a basically corrupt system, who find some way to enter and avoid being corrupted, are probably in the most difficult place in which to continue to listen to their inner voice. In some ways, the lonely hero has an easier time. Another academic is a good example of the other sort, the one who enters the system and bides his time. This man spoke of his notion of creating his inner secret police, being in synch with how they functioned so that he could learn patience and still not be corrupt. He wasn't a party member, but he was able to travel and to publish at least some of what he wrote. He enjoys considerable respect among his colleagues.

The inner voice speaks to the essence of freedom for the individual, the manifestation of freedom for the individual. If the individual's inner voice is a din of obsessions or fears, he or she is hardly free. Our collective state of freedom is influenced by the extent to which our actions are constrained by our context. Neither in America nor in Eastern Europe is the mother of three small children free to spend her time self-indulgently. If we assume responsibilities freely (having three small children may or may not be a freely assumed responsibility), then presumably we also freely assume the constraints and limitations the responsibilities impose.

In the American ideal, shaped over a couple of centuries of looking across a vast stretch of land populated by civilizations that the Euro-Christian didn't know how to understand or respect, freedom came to be associated with an unlimited horizon. A harmony of interests, as extolled by Anonymous, allowed for and even encouraged the expansion of enterprise in both size and location. Compare that to the Eastern European penchant for responsibility. Perhaps, Anonymous offered a biased perspective when casting many European societies (and other societies in the world) as examples of failed harmony. We might find not only that Anonymous ignored the abuse of labor in American mills (and in American cotton fields), but also the unique challenge of finding harmony of interests in countries where there is an emphasis on collective responsibility. Perhaps, this harmony is hard to achieve without the driving force of personal interests. Adam Smith might have been at least partially correct in declaring that self-interests are built into the human psyche. But doesn't this mean we are inviting all self-interests to the table?

The concept of freedom resonates for people all over the world. Some qualities of it are universal; some are socio-culturally determined. The writings of Vaclav Havel demonstrate most clearly how freedom is an internal state of being, distinct from one's relationship to society. Limits and responsibilities come with the social context. The West has long claimed the patent and proprietary rights to individual freedom. The European culture that transplanted itself to the "New World" was formed by refugees and exiles, slaves and adventurers. The concept of self that informs this culture includes a sense of infinite possibilities—within the context of a rational harmony of interests.

The great expanse of land that opened the way for expanded horizons also contributed to releasing individuals from the constraints of fixed social expectations. Generations of people in the United States have lived their lives at the end of a journey from their families and points of origin. The inner voice claims greater authority in a setting where the social milieu is diluted by miles of open space and discontinuity between generations. Yet, the harmony of interests by all accounts has not been sustained in the United States. Polarization exists alongside silo perspectives. The center does not hold and interests no longer (if they ever did) intersect. Not everyone is invited to the table and wage slavery still

exits inside (as well as outside) the American boundaries. What must be done to re-introduce (or introduce for the first time) an actual harmony of interests that involves all members of the American society. And how would such a state contribute to the emergence and maintenance of true freedom?

Communities of Coherence and Grace

I propose that a lasting harmony of interests requires that our society provides both inclusion and privilege on the part of all members of our society. Inclusion means that all members of society are invited to the table. Privilege means that all members of our society are afforded the opportunity to be heard, understood and appreciated by everyone else sitting at the table. For inclusion and privilege to be engaged, a social structure and culture must be established that is based in a secular sense of coherence—and that ultimately requires a spiritual sense of grace. This is a very tall order—but there are means to bring about these favorable conditions that have been identified by several notable observers of the American community.

One of the observers is Robert Bellah, who together with several colleagues (Bellah, et al., 1985), revisited the analysis of American communities offered more than a century ago by Alexis de Tocqueville. Bellah and his associates base their analysis, in part, on a review of American communities that have veered far from the image of coherent American communities offered by de Tocqueville. Bellah believes that such communities cannot endure and the story to be told about these communities must contain other elements. As Bellah notes (1985, pp. 281-282):

. . . that is not the whole story. It could not be the whole story, for the culture of separation, if it ever became completely dominant, would collapse of its own incoherence. Or, even more likely, well before that happened, an authoritarian state would emerge to provide the coherence the culture no longer could. If we are not entirely a mass of interchangeable fragments within an aggregate, if we are in part qualitatively distinct members of a whole, it is because there are still operating among us, with whatever difficulties, traditions that tell us about the nature of the world, about the nature of society, and about who we are as people. Primarily biblical and republican, these traditions are . . . important . . . and significant to some degree for almost all [members of a society]. Somehow families, churches, a variety of cultural associations, and, even if only in the interstices, schools and universities, do manage to communicate a form of life, a *paideia*, in the sense of growing up in a morally and intellectually intelligible world.

At a fundamental level, Bellah and his colleagues seem to be suggesting that the “glue” holding a community together and providing it with guidance is found in a wide diversity of institutions that exist within a community. This theme of diversity aligns with Anonymous’ harmony of interests that must exist among all elements of a society. I suggest that the glue of coherence also seems to be found in what Eliade (1959) identified many years ago as both the sacred and profane domains of life. The profane is to be found in the secular institutions of a community (Anonymous’ economically based harmony of interests), while the sacred is to be found in its spiritual institutions (what might be labeled a sacred harmony of interests). In alignment with Bellah, I propose that coherence and a sustained harmony of interests requires attention to both the secular and sacred visions held by members of a community.

Ingredients of Harmony and Coherence

What then are the ingredients of a sustainable community—what creates a culture of coherence? What would the secular and sacred visions look like and how do they help to create a culture in the community that invites all its members to the table? Even before examining Bellah's response to these questions, I turn to Emile Durkheim (1933) whose own analysis regarding social structures is aligned with the proposition regarding specialization and the harmony of interests offered by Anonymous. Durkheim suggested that specialization (or as he labeled it the "division of labor") is to be found at all levels of society—beginning in the home and extending out to all aspects of society. For Durkheim, specialization came into existence as people began to cluster in communities. With greater density, there was a greater tendency for social conflict to emerge and specialization, according to Durkheim, helped to minimize this conflict. With the specialization, however, came the need for a balancing integration.

Durkheim proposed that in a premodern society there is a "mechanical solidarity" brought about by shared values and perspectives on the very confined world in which members of this society dwelled. This solidarity often was founded in an even deeper commitment to specific traditions that seems to be more sacred than secular. I am reminded of the emphasis on tradition to be found in the Jewish community portrayed in Bock and Harnick's *Fiddler on the Roof* (based on stories written by Sholem Aleichem) With the emergence of modern societies, the integration had to be engaged through more formal, secular structures—as Lawrence and Lorsch (1967) were to propose many years later. As Anonymous noted, government was often required to provide the "protection" and integration, as were management structures in the large, emerging organizations (especially corporations).

What about families, as the smallest unit of society. Integration was to be found in the sacred covenant that exists among members of the family. One might, as Erich Fromm suggested, even consider the integration to be founded in "love" and devotion—the "inner voice" identified by Prague's Professor Brichacek. I noted in my previous essay that Fromm (1941) proposes—as did Teilhard de Chardin (1955)—that the basis of freedom must be the sharing of responsibility and commitment. It is the expression of love, according to Fromm, that balances off the need for individual rights (as a vehicle for one to overcome one's existential anxiety) with the societal need for collective responsibility. Does love or at least an often-sacred devotion to those with whom one is sharing a home provide the foundation for a more widely extended societal commitment to Anonymous' harmony of interests? Does the harmony collapse when the familial devotion and societal commitment cease to be prevalent? I devote the remainder of this essay to reflection on and an attempt to answer these two critical questions.

I turn first to the insights offered by Bellah and his colleagues in seeking to answer these questions. They identify multiple dimensions of integration and coherence. At the most obvious level, coherence is embedded in the secular and sacred traditions of a community—as Tevye declares in *Fiddler on the Roof*. The community has a history that contains memories of collective action and recognition of shared contribution (as well as memories of separation and abuse). This history serves as a form of collective generativity (Bergquist and Quehl, 2019) with each member of the community learning about that which deserves the greatest amount of care—and about which, as a result, the community focuses its caring actions (Erikson, 1963).

Bellah and his colleagues (1985, p. 282) have provides their own frame for this caring ingredient of coherence:

. . . we have never been, and still are not, a collection of private individuals who, except for a conscious contract to create a minimal government, have nothing in common. Our lives make sense in a thousand ways, most of which we are unaware of because of traditions that are centuries, if not millennia, old. It is these traditions that help us to know that it does make a difference who we are and how we treat one another. Even the mass media, with their tendency to homogenize feelings and sensations, cannot entirely avoid transmitting such qualitative distinctions, in however muted a form.

Building on the frame offered by Bellah, we offer both a secular and a sacred vision of community and accompany these visions with a list of ingredients to be found in a coherent community. We begin with the secular vision and its ingredients.

A Secular Vision of Coherence

The secular domain resides in the civic virtues of those residing in a community. This notion of civic virtue is incorporated in the term, *Paideia*, that Bellah references. *Paideia* is a vision of community that was first articulated in ancient Greece. As Bellah notes (in our previous quote) this vision refers to the socialization of children through education and the modeling of exemplary behavior, so that the children might become ideal members of their community (the *Polis*).

Civic Virtue Above the Line

What Bellah fails to mention is that this vision is situated in the upper class of Greece. A socio-economic Line was drawn in these ancient times (as it is in many contemporary societies). An education was offered in Greece to the upper-class children that provided for the refinement of the aristocratic children's taste in all sciences and the arts (literature, art, theater, etc.). This "liberal" education is provided along with acquisition of the more practical tools of government and the physical tools of athletics and competition. In essence, the youthful upper-class males (and only the males) were "molded" to the ideal of *Kalos Kagathos*—which in Greek refers to the "beautiful and good."

In its Ancient Grecian form, *Paideia* certainly does not provide a secular vision of community that is inclusive. Not everyone is invited to the table of education. This aristocratic vision of civic virtue, however, is aligned with Bellah's vision of coherence.

Undoubtedly, the satisfaction of work well done, indeed "the pursuit of excellence." is a permanent and positive human motive. Where its reward is the approbation of one's fellows more than the accumulation of great private wealth. it can contribute to what the founders of our republic called civic virtue. Indeed, in a revived social ecology, it would be a primary form of civic virtue. (Bellah et al., 1985 p. 288)

Bellah and his colleagues (Bellah et al., 1985 p. 288) venture even further. They describe how finding satisfaction in work has a ripple effect throughout the community in which this perspective on work is prominent:

And from it would flow a number of positive consequences. For one thing, the split between private and public work and family, that has grown for over a century, might begin to be mended. If the ethos of work were less brutally competitive and more ecologically harmonious, it would be more consonant with the ethos of private life and, particularly, of family life. A less frantic concern for advancement and a reduction of working hours for both men and women would make it easier for women to be full participants in the workplace without abandoning family life. By the same token, men would be freed to take an equal role at home and in child care. In this way what seemed at first to be a change only in the nature of work would turn out to have major consequences for family life as well.

The continuing exposition of civic virtue by Bellah (Bellah, et. al., 1985, p. 289) brings us directly back to the fundamental notions of harmony and coherence:

Another consequence of the change in the meaning of work from private aggrandizement to public contribution would be to weaken the motive to keep the complexity of our society invisible. It would become part of the ethos of work to be aware of our intricate connectedness and interdependence. There would be no fear of social catastrophe or hope of inordinate reward motivating us to exaggerate our own independence. And with such a change, we might begin to be better able to understand why, though we are all, as human beings, morally deserving of equal respect, some of us begin with familial or cultural advantages or disadvantages that others do not have. Or perhaps, since we would not conceive of life so much in terms of a race in which all the prizes go to the swiftest, we might begin to make moral sense of the fact that there are real cultural differences among us, that we do not all want the same thing, and that it is not a moral defect to find other things in life of interest besides consuming ambition. In short, a restored social ecology might allow us to mitigate the harm that has been done to disadvantaged groups without blaming the victims or trying to turn them into carbon copies of middle-class high achievers.

It seems that the inculcation of civic virtues in youth who live above the socio-economic line may be necessary. However, this exclusive ownership of the compass by those who are wealthy is insufficient if a secular vision of coherence is to be viable. Harmony and coherence ultimately require that all members of the community are invited to the table. A social ecology of inclusion (and privilege) must be established. This requires additional ingredients. A coherent community with harmony of interests needs rocks, pebbles and sand. . . .

Community Capital

What is needed to move beyond civic virtue in building a secular vision of a harmonious and coherent communities that is viable? To answer this question, we turn to insights offered Ron Kitchens and his associates (Kitchens, Gross and Smith, 2008) in their exploration of “community capital.” This capital comes from multiple sources—rocks, pebbles and sand. Community capital comes in part from institutions in a community that support broad based community participation and economic security for all members of the community. These institutions are often the source of employment for its citizen. In a coherent community, the leaders of these organizations treat their employees in a thoughtful

manner that yields a sense of purpose, participation, and commitment—and creates the harmony of interests that Anonymous described almost two centuries ago. As Bea Boccalandro (2021) has recently noted, “to have work feel good, we need it to do good.” Employees are invited to the table. Community capital exists at this first level through the sense (as Estes has suggested) that investments are being made by many stakeholders. This being the case, then rewards for this investment should accrue to all these stakeholders.

Kitchens proposes that there is a second source of capital in a coherent community. Community capital is generated by the services and events being offered in this community. These services and events are inclusive and attractive to all members of the community if it is coherent. Regardless of their status in the workplace, all members of the community are invited to events occurring outside the workplace. One finds both the employers and employees at local concerts or at meetings of the city council. Socio-economic lines might still exist, but they are easily crossed without repercussion. Community engagement should be just as democratic and broad-based as democracy inside the workplace.

There is a third source of community capital. Kitchens suggests that this is the specific quality of interactions that take place among those living in a coherent community. These interactions are respectful and inviting for all community members—they are harmonious. The quality of interaction at the table is particularly important and diversity of perspective is welcomed (not just tolerated). Privilege is prevalent, with all members of the community being allowed (even invited) to enter and receive services from the institutions, to participate in the events and to engage in the many diverse relationships that are to be found when all members of the coherent community are interacting with one another. This is what civic virtue is ultimately about and how a coherent community can be created and maintained.

Ron Kitchens provides a brief story of how these three levels of community capital come together. He invites people to watch as he fills a bowl with rocks (representing the first type of community capital). He asks if the bowl can contain anything else. The obvious answer is “No.” Kitchens then adds some pebbles to the bowl (representing the second type of community capital). They settle in among the rocks. The bowl can contain more than the rocks. It can accommodate pebbles.

Kitchen goes one step further. He adds sand to the bowl (representing the third type of community capital). Kitchen demonstrates that a community can be filled to the brim with rocks, pebbles and sand. All three forms of community capital can (and should) exist in what Anonymous has identified as a society’s harmony of interest and what Bellah and his colleagues have identified as a community of coherence. Kitchen’s full bowl provides a compelling secular vision of this harmony and coherence. Rocks, pebbles and sand are essential ingredients in any secular vision of a viable, coherent community. Thank you, Ron Kitchens, Anonymous and Robert Bellah.

American Social Security: A Governmental Story of Harmony and Secular Coherence

With all of these visionary statements about harmony and coherence, I wish to offer two real-life narratives concerning the engagement of a harmony of interest and the appearance of secular

coherence in the United States. One of these narrative occurs at the level of governance and at the national level, while the second narrative is about the engagement of harmony and coherence at the level of one organization operating in the State of Maine. The first narrative takes place during the early 1930s, when the United States was in the midst of a major depression, while the second narrative takes place in 2020, as Americans face the equally as great challenge of coping with the COVID-19 virus. Both narratives have featured players as well as a supporting cast.

Protecting the Five Freedoms

I begin with the declaration made in 1941 by then President, Franklyn D. Roosevelt, regarding what he identified as the four (and later expanded to five) freedoms. I begin at this point because Roosevelt is articulating a vision that I believe is directly aligned with my own more modest and less finely phrases proposing that true freedom only comes when there is a mutuality of interests (as well as a balance between individual rights and collective responsibilities, as well as a compelling vision of the future – propositions I am offering in my other two essays on true freedom).

Roosevelt is saying that true freedom requires a freedom from fear, freedom from financial dependence, , freedom from financial obligations, freedom from our own wants – and fredom to use our time as we wish. All of these freedoms require collabortion among citizens based on a harmony of interests. A level of what Bellah identified as coherence is also requires if members of a society are to seek freedom not just for themselves, but also for all other members of their community.

For Roosevelt to offer these freedoms with some degree of justification, he must have established a track record of engaging government to provide when Anonymous identifies as the protection of a mutuality of interests. He can thank one person, in particular, for helping him build a credible record of political and legislative achievement during the 1930s that provided this protection (labeled “social security”). This person was Frances Perkins, who was not only the first woman to serve in the U.S. cabinet, but is also the longest serving member of any cabinet (1933-1945). Perkins was the primary architect (along with Francis Townsend and several visionary members of Congress) of Social Securty Act of 1935. This act produced not only the now widely recognized protection of older Americans, but established unemployment insurance, assistance for homeless, dependetand neglected children (tragically prevalent during the depression), funds for maternal and child welfare, and public health services (Richardson, 2021).

Individualims and the Role of Government

The wide-ranging social security enactments envisioned by Perkins were swimming against the focus on individual rightsthat had been dominant in previous administrations and franklly most of American culture during the late 19th and early 20th Century. It took not only the Great Depression to shake up this abti-governmental socio-economic policy, but also the diligent and skillful work of Francis Perkins who pushed hard to get the eventually overwhelming support for the Social Securty Act (371 to 33 in the House of Representatives and 77 to 6 in the US Senaate). As Richardson (2021), an American hisitorian has noted:

[Perkins] brought to the position a vision of government very different from that of the Republicans who had run it in the 1920s. While men like President Herbert Hoover had harped on the idea of a “rugged individualism” in which men worked their way up, providing for their families on their own, Perkins recognized that people in communities had always supported each other. The vision of a hardworking man supporting his wife and children was more myth than reality.

In this insightful analysis, we find the need not only for governmental reform, but also a challenging of deeply embedded assumptions (myths) regarding the need only for personal initiatives (on the part of the male head-of-household). As Anonymous pointed out almost a century earlier, men and their families need “protection” if their own interests are to be honored. Perkins had faith that underlying these individualistic assumptions regarding no need for protection, was the even more deeply held commitment to a coherent and caring community that had been identified in the 19th Century by de Tocqueville (and reinterpreted in the the 1960s by Bellah and colleagues). Perkins seems to believe, like Berne Weiss’ Professor Brichacek, that there is an “inner voice” that can still be heard amidst all the declarations regarding “rugged individualism” and the primary role of leadership played by the male head-of-household.

I turn again to Richardson’s (2021) account:

When asked to describe the origins of the Social Security Act, Perkins mused that its roots came from the very beginning of the nation. When Alexis de Tocqueville wrote *Democracy in America* in 1835, she noted, he thought Americans were uniquely “so generous, so kind, so charitably disposed.” “Well, I don’t know anything about the times in which De Tocqueville visited America,” she said, but “I do know that at the time I came into the field of social work, these feelings were real.”

I would suggest that De Tocqueville was essentially correct among American culture; however, we do need to add Anonymous’ correction regarding protection of mutual interests. Perkins, Roosevelt and the US Congress were aware, like Anonymous, of the need to reinforce American generosity with carefully crafted, but strongly enacted social security for all of the American citizens. Secular coherence requires that government not sit on the sidelines, while a small number of powerful actors sit without opposition at the table.

American Roots: An Organizational Story of Harmony and Secular Coherence

It is timely as I am writing this essay that not only Heather Cox Richardson write about Francis Perkins and the Social Security Act of 1935, but also that *Downeast* (a magazine about Maine) published an article (Stade, 2020) concerning a new “mill” in Maine, called *American Roots*. It is this second narrative that provides us with an example of secular coherence operating at the level of an individual organization.

We find that a couple of visionary entrepreneurs can establish a mutuality of interests with those employed in their company. It can be done. The operations of American Roots exemplify Anonymous’ harmony of interest as the owners of this company have asked all of its employees to help meet the

unique challenges that the COVID-19 virus poses to this company (and virtually all other companies in the United States).

The American Roots Business

I first offer a bit of background information. In its original form, American Roots produced more than four million pounds of cotton per year for many years, beginning in 1866. The fourth floor of the old mill was newly occupied in 2014 by Ben and Whitney Waxman, who now make hoodies, T-shirts and fleece vests. They have hired a staff of about two dozen people to produce these products, and founded their company to prove that the production of high quality union-made and American-made clothing is feasible. The inspiring story of Ben and Whitney's business centers on coping with the Covid-19 virus. However, I will focus on those aspects of their story that align with and provide concrete expression of several points regarding harmony and secular coherence.

There is, first, a founding story. It begins with Ben's belief that:

. . . capitalism could be a force for good, if companies were created to benefit communities instead of shareholders. [Ben] dreamed of building a business where every employee was unionized and received a living wage, paid vacation time, unlimited sick leave, and access to health insurance. He'd ensure that executives never earned more than a few times the median worker pay - unlike at many big American companies, where an executive might make thousands of times the median pay of workers. (At American Roots, Ben says "I am the CEO, but I will never make half a million when a worker only makes \$30,000 - it'll never, ever, ever happen.") (Slade, 2020, p. 94)

This vision and commitment on Ben Waxman's part is directly aligned with the spirit and vision of Anonymous' harmony of interest and is founded on Ben's own history as a "union man" and political organizer.

There is another part of the American Roots narrative that touches directly on the themes of privilege and inclusion that reside at the heart of any harmony of interests. This part of the story has to do with a specific day when a decision had to be made about how the organization would respond to shifting market conditions following the outbreak of Covid-19 (Slade, 2020, p. 95):

On Monday morning, the Waxmans gathered their workers one more time. Ninety percent of them had come to the U.S. from abroad, most fairly recently. Ben told 18 of them he would have to lay them off, at least temporarily. Then he raised the prospect of reopening. He and Whitney would do everything they could to create a safe environment, he said, but there would still be risks. He asked the room, "If we convert the factory to produce PPE, will you come back to work?" Every single hand went up. Khalid Al Kinani, a worker who had fled Baghdad years before, announced to the group, "This is our duty as new Americans."

This is a remarkable example of what happens when workers feel included in their community (or at least in their organization).

Broadened participation and agility

With the open communication to their employees regarding the status of their company, Ben and Whitney Waxman embraced the challenge of potentially rethinking their entire product line. This

willingness to be agile and open is only possible because there was the deep-seated commitment to certain charter-based principles: (1) assigning priority to the welfare of their employees (value) and (2) showing that American-made products can be of high quality and American businesses can compete on an international market (vision). Ben and Whitney had identified the unique competencies residing inside their company. Most importantly, Ben and Whitney looked outside their organization for opportunities. This is where Ben and Whitney found their breakthrough (Slade, 2020, p. 95):

During the week that followed, Ben and Whitney considered making surgical gowns, surgical booties, masks, and more. "We were open to anything," Whitney says. Then Ben heard from his friend James Morin, COO of Gorham-based Flowfold, a small manufacturer of sporty wallets, bags, and backpacks. Maine Health had just instituted new safety protocols that increased demand for protective equipment. Morin had worked with them to develop a face shield, and the design was approved, but he lacked the staff to fulfill the 10,000-unit order. Could American Roots do it? The Waxmans were determined to try.

I return to Slade's (2020, p. 95) narration:

Following state guidelines, they had the factory deep cleaned and retooled, and they fitted out a huge adjacent room to create "Factory 2," which would allow for more space between sewing tables. Workers from Portland's International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees \ Local 114 volunteered their time to hang 7,000 square feet of heavy plastic sheeting from the ceilings, to isolate workstations.

When a broader sense of investment is engaged, we are likely to find, as did the Waxmans, that voluntary support will be offered by members of other organizations in one's community (such as those enrolled in a local union). A broader harmony of interest is established through engagement of people outside the strict confines of the organization.

At this point, with this assistance provided by members of the local Maine community, American Roots was ready to begin operating once again – with critical support being offered by their own employees. This informed assistance was possible because those working for the Waxmans were sitting at the table and had access to all important information regarding the company's operations. Privilege (access to information) accompanies inclusion (sitting at the table) in American Roots: "A small group of American Roots employees spent a few days doing time trials to determine how many people would be needed to fulfill the face-shield order." (Slade, 2020, p. 95).

Almost immediately, results of the harmonious collaboration began to pay off. Orders came in and employees could be rehired because of the agile reconceptualization of American Root's product line (Slade, 2020, p. 95):

Almost as soon as they'd sent out their first batch, other orders came flooding in: fire departments, nursing homes, hospitals. Then, a 50,000-unit contract from the New Jersey State Police. By mid-April, American Roots had hired back those it had laid off and added a dozen new positions besides.

Before bringing this brief tale of success to a close, it is important to note yet one additional way in which collaboration with a community beyond that of the organization can be of great benefit. This segment of the story begins with a major source of frustration for the Waxmans. This frustration

concerned the lack of formal institutional support for their organization during the Covid-19 crisis. Their company could contribute much to their local community and there would be costs associated with the demise of their company. Yet, no formal financial investment was forthcoming from outside.

It was only the informal help offered by members of their local community that kept American Roots afloat. A harmony of interests prevailed in this community. As has been the case with many small American business owners, Ben and Whitney Waxman found little governmental support during the Covid crisis. But they did something about this state of isolation (Slade, 2020, p. 96):

Frustrated by the lack of coordination at the federal level, the Waxmans submitted an op-ed to the *Washington Post*. The piece ran in mid-April and was widely shared on social media. It described their pivot from manufacturing garments to PPE, and it both rallied small businesses to rise to pandemic-era challenges and made clear that those businesses could benefit from national leadership more focused on getting PPE produced and delivered where it's needed. From the moment the op-ed hit, Ben says, "the phone rang nonstop, all day, seven days a week, from 6:30 in the morning to 11 at night." American Roots filled orders from unions, public works departments, Reporters Without Borders, schools, and more. By July, more than 100 people were working in the factory. And the protocols—distancing, mask-wearing, and hand-sanitizing—seemed to be working.

Finding True North

What does this brief case study teach us? We know that a community of secular coherence and, more specifically, an organization of coherence can still be successful in America. This harmony of interests requires that founders and leaders be fully committed to the welfare of their organization's employees. Its employees are included to and privileged at the table where problem-solving and decision-making processes of the organization are engaged. Investment and benefits are more broadly conceived as boundaries are broken between the organization and the caring community in which it is located.

All of this means that there might yet be a day when American Roots can return to its founding business (Slade, 2020, p. 110):

Along one wall of the factory, with windows overlooking the Presumpscot, piles and piles of precut hoodies await stitching. They've sat untouched since March. A few weeks back, a silkscreen artist came in to customize a few of them with a mermaid motif for 2 special orders. To anyone exhausted with mask wearing and elbow bumping and fear, the army-green sweatshirts are a reminder that there was a time before COVID and there will be a time after. Those brand-new, American-made, union-made, hand-screened hoodies seem like a promise that, someday, American Roots will get back to doing what it was built to do.

An important lesson is embedded in this final part of the story about American Roots. When there is a clear founding mission and a clear articulation of shared interests, then an organization can retain its "true north" even when it must shift directions for a short period of time. Change can be interwoven with continuity.

When there is a compelling sense of purpose for those working in an organization and when they are involved in plotting the direction for their organization, then a sustained commitment to the long-term welfare of the company is retained, even when it must shift directions. Under conditions of a guiding

True North, those who own and lead the company will ensure that the breadth of shared interests in the company (both inside and outside the organization) is secure. They are then more likely to find support coming from multiple sources. This is ultimately, what secular coherence is all about.

A Sacred Vision of Coherence

I propose that Harmony of Interests requires more than just secular coherence if it is to be sustained over a lengthy period of time in any society. While Adam Smith's and Anonymous' economic (and political) perspective is of great value, it is not sufficient. A dose of De Tocqueville's generosity of spirit is required—perhaps even a major injection. A sacred coherence is required. Fortunately, as Francis Perkins noted, the sacred domain is to be found in all communities—at least in de Tocqueville's America.

Is there any justification for this more outlandish claim that the sacred is to be found in all communities (and by extension in all societies)—not just those in the United States. I would offer the following perspective as a way of providing this claim with some credibility. Specifically, by anthropological standards, we are living only a few minutes past the hunter/gatherer era in our evolution—and hunter/gatherers lived and worked in a world that was saturated with spiritual forces and entities. Many forms of animism were embraced by the hunter/gatherers that were founded on the belief that these forces and entities are embedded in the physical environment traversed by these people. In contemporary societies the spiritual and sacred are embedded in the meaning which people assign to their work—endeavors that are filled with Soul and Spirit (Moore, 1992).

The Sacred and Spiritual are also found in the contemporary sanctuaries we create (whether workshops, carnivals, or retreat sites). These are special sites where learning and re-creation can occur (Bergquist, 2017). In many societies (such as Hawaii) one can retreat temporarily to a sanctuary—so that forgiveness can be found (before returning to society). This forgiveness might be granted by other people (a profound source of inclusion) or by oneself (a way to discover or renew privilege). The Spiritual and Sacred are also to be found in ceremonies we perform (whether a wedding, funeral or birthday party) and processions we enact (whether a church service, parade or New Orleans Second Line). The animism of our ancient ancestors is still alive—it just takes somewhat different form.

Community of Meaning and Memory

All of this suggests that a sacred vision of coherence can be founded on the belief that everything in the life of a community has meaning and purpose—and therefore should be appreciated, celebrated and remembered. A community of memory can be founded on this sense of meaning and purpose. This community of memory becomes the primary forum for collective appreciation and celebration. Bellah and his colleagues (1985, p. 282) put it this way:

The communities of memory of which we have spoken are concerned in a variety of ways to give a qualitative meaning to the living of life, to time and space, to persons and groups. Religious communities, for example, do not experience time in the way the mass media present it—as a continuous flow of qualitatively meaningless sensations. The day, the week, the season, the year are punctuated by an alternation of the sacred and the profane. Prayer breaks into our daily life at the beginning of a meal, at the end of the day, at common worship, reminding us that our

utilitarian pursuits are not the whole of life. that a fulfilled life is one in which God and neighbor are remembered first.

At this point, Bellah brings the secular and the sacred together:

Many of our religious traditions recognize the significance of silence as a way of breaking the incessant flow of sensations and opening our hearts to the wholeness of being. And . . . tradition, too, has ways of giving form to time, reminding us on particular dates of the great events of our past, or of the heroes who helped to teach us what we are as a free people. Even our private family life takes on a shared rhythm with a Thanksgiving dinner or a Fourth of July picnic.

As Bellah notes, the assignment of meaning concerns the relationship between a community and its deeply felt commitment to interpersonal relationship and group relationships. Ultimately, sacred coherence is based on the overarching relationship between community and some divine (sacred) entity. From this perspective, harmony might be said to be angelic when properly tuned.

The *I-Thou* of Coherence

We find a guide in our exploration of the sacred, in the overarching perspectives on relationships and its associated spiritual tradition in the vision offered by the Jewish Theologian, Martin Buber in *I-Thou* (1958). As is the case with the closely related concept of *Agape* (a form of love to be found in the Greek lexicon), Buber's *I/Thou* relationship is formed on behalf of some greater devotion or cause. There is a third element involved in a sacred relationship between two or more people, or a gathering of people in a community. This third element can be the honoring of God, achieving the Ultimate Good, or building the Shining City on the Hill—a city of harmony.

As Reinhold Niebuhr (1986, p. 150) notes, *agape* moves beyond the Greek concept of *Philia*, which is a form of mutual love between two people. *Agape* requires the third level—just as mutuality of interest ultimately requires not just a trusting and equitable relationship between two people or institutions, but also a protective societal structure. The binding, relational “glue” of *agape* is to be found in that which transcends those individuals who are engaged in the relationship. In many cultures, there is a dedication of all members of the society to a specific set of values (a harmony of interests) and ways of finding meaning in their world. This dedication blends the secular and the sacred.

A *I/Thou* covenant points to a shared commitment that extends beyond the interests or even welfare of either party. A community or institution-based charter of harmony points to outcomes that go well beyond personal or institutional interests (Bergquist, 2003). Rocks, pebbles and sand are all acknowledged by those committing to the charter. This charter represents a commitment on their part to a larger sacred vision of coherence.

It is a vision that provides guidance regarding the future of this community and/or this institution. It is when an institution, community (or entire nation) has a clear and compelling image of its own future that this institution, community (nation) is more likely to endure (Polak, 1973). I will have much more to say about charters and planning for the future in my final essay in this series on true freedom. A sacred

I-Thou relationship and a culture of *agape* ultimately expand the social ecology of harmony. The love of something beyond ourselves enables us to love (or at least respect and include) those with whom we affiliate and work. *I-Thou* resides at the heart of a coherent community.

Other spiritual traditions move us even further toward a sense of transcendence and unity. For instance, many schools of Buddhist philosophy and practice move us (individually and collectively) to a higher transcendent plane. Similar perspectives are to be found in the religious and philosophical traditions of many Asian countries. It is interesting to note that many of these ancient perspectives are complemented by the radical conclusions to be reached by those studying quantum mechanics. All physical life (including human being) is constituted not of individual entities, but rather of a single universal consciousness and flow of energy. Our individual identity is merely (and ultimately) an illusion. Thus, it is essential (and inevitable) that we find common cause and commitment with other human manifestations as we co-create and share this one reality.

What are the implications to be drawn from these diverse spiritual traditions? I propose that these implications lead us to new ways (and back to some very old ways) when considering the nature of harmonious and coherence community. While religions and other sacred traditions in many cultures have helped to produce the spirit of capitalism and individualism (Weber, 1958), they have also provided us with reasons and guidelines for framing, supporting and expanding on the secular civic virtue that Bellah and his colleagues have described. Envisioning a sacred vision, we reference the concept of Grace as it was introduced by the noted theologian, Paul Tillich (1948).

Grace, Love and Collective Memory

Tillich speaks about the structure of grace in the shared history of a society. If we specifically introduce our focus on harmonious and coherent communities, this structure of grace could be considered the history embedded in the collective memory. It is a history that includes not just the community's successes, but also its suffering and abuse. Tillich believes that Grace only comes with the act of acceptance and reform—such as was found in the Truth and Reconciliation actions taken in South Africa following this country's release from Apartheid. It has also been represented in the *Satyagraha* (civic disobedience) enacted by Gandhi in India (and later emulated in the actions taken by Martin Luther King in the United States).

It is in the collective memory of acceptance, forgiveness and reform that we are likely to find Tillich's grace—as well as the “clean pain” that Resmaa Menakem (2017) identifies. The pain of all members of the community can, in Menakem's words, be “metabolized” and made clean only in the recognition, understanding, appreciation, commemoration and (finally) search for forgiveness and redemption regarding the full history of a community. We can return to the insights offered by Reinhold Niebuhr who states that forgiveness is the final manifestation of love—and it transcends the search for justice in any society. As Niebuhr (1932, p. 266) notes: “love must strive for something purer than justice if it would attain justice.”

Forgiveness and love seem to be critical to any engagement in “clean pain” and any search for Tillian's grace. Such was the case in South Africa and India. Hopefully, this will soon be case in the USA regarding

race relations and economic inequality. Can harmony of interests ever be found in the United States or elsewhere in the world without coming to terms with the history of abuse in this society? Is forgiveness possible and can love be found in a world of polarization and lingering trauma?

Conclusions

I believe that an ongoing process should be engaged within and should help to build or restore Robert Bellah's community of coherence and ultimately ensure a harmony of interest. In alignment with Robert Bellah and his colleagues, I propose that two ingredients are essential to building and sustaining this community of coherence. The first is a shared sense of spiritual unity and a transcendent set of sacred values and purposes. This ingredient is one that Bellah and his colleagues repeatedly turn to: the abiding belief to be found in the community regarding human progress and a sense of greater purpose in life.

The second ingredient returns us to the wisdom offered by Paul Tillich. It brings together the insights of Bellah and Menakem. New learning and reform must be founded in a grace-filled community of memory. As Menakem observes, without the metabolizing of pain (to make it "clean"), all members of a community, whether they be those who are abused, those who do the abusing, or those who allow for the abuse, will be stuck in "dirty" pain. It is the enduring, unmetabolized and unforgiven pain that leads inevitably to polarization, isolation and creation of further collective trauma in the community. It seems that we must be vigilant in bringing grace, history and clear pain to our search for a harmony of interests. Thank you, Paul Tillich, Reinhold Niebuhr and Resmaa Menakem for helping to identify the requirement and conditions of love, forgiveness, grace and clean pain.

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