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Economics and Ultimate Reality: The Problem of Balance between External and Internal Forms of Wealth

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Introduction

Since the Industrial Revolution, which began in the late eighteenth century, humans have been living in a state of economic crisis. The structure of the crisis is well known: we face an ever-increasing technological capacity to satisfy material wants at the expense of poverty for many, frenetic activity for others, and an impending ecological catastrophe for all.[1] What is striking is the apparent failure of economics as a discipline to deal adequately with the crisis. Such a failure can only be attributed to economics being out of touch with some aspect of reality. With this lack of connection in mind, I will be presenting an alternative approach to traditional forms of economic thought.

As indicated by my title , the failure of economics can be linked to its exclusive concern with that part of reality known as the external. If economics is to have any hope of dealing successfully with the ongoing crisis spawned by the Industrial Revolution, the discipline must broaden its base by incorporating another dimension of reality, which I call the internal. In so doing, a balanced approach to economic reality may be achieved, whereas the current imbalance underlies the discipline's apparent weakness. Imbalance in one's perspective can only lead to a distortion in one's apprehension of the real, and this is as true of economics as it is of any other form of intellectual inquiry.

The term ”ultimate,” which figures in the title, refers precisely to that level of reality which can only be brought to light if distortion is minimized. Absolute ”truth” might not be absolutely attainable, but it is probably a goal that can be approached ever more closely. Differing cultural or historical perspectives on an area of inquiry need not be considered distorting since they may add new insights that could be integrated by skilful interpreters. Contrariwise, imbalance based on an exclusively external or internal approach would tend to weaken a discipline's ability to come to grips with its subject.

Disciplinary balance and imbalance are relative qualities and tend to shift. Thus, a relatively successful balance may be seen in physics, where a high level of experimental activity associated with a systematic probing of the external world is balanced by a theoretical framework associated with the abstract internal world of mathematics. The ”success” of physics is measured by its predictive as well as its integrative power, not to mention its ability to engender a strong consensus among a large number of physicists. However, what is internal and external in economics—apart from what a balance might be with respect to these—cannot be assumed to be similar to the situation in any other discipline. Indeed, the need to generalize these concepts from a more trans-disciplinary perspective is crucial before new directions in economics may be achieved, and, with that end in view, the next section of this discussion will define internal and external reality with respect to economics, after which the subsequent section (Neoclassical Economic Theory) describes how elements of neoclassical economic theory illustrate an over-emphasis on an externalist approach to economic reality. Following this, I will focus on the tension between internal and external forms of wealth by considering the relation between their two fundamental embodiments: interest (in the monetary sense of a charge on something that is loaned to another) and the anthropologically significant notion of "gift." The fifth section offers a contemporary strategy for representing internal wealth and balancing it with external forms. I conclude by placing the internal and external dimensions of economic existence in a broader historical context.

The External and the Internal

As underlying aspects of reality, the complementary notions of internal and external vary within differing disciplinary contexts. In general, internality refers to a common or shared space, while externality refers to being on the outside of such a space. In simple terms, the reality and experience of unity or integration is the embodiment of internality, and the reality and experience of separation or disunity is the embodiment of externality. For example, two individuals are in a common space when they simultaneously occupy a given room. Hence, internality is the condition of commonality that allows for unhindered communication and interchange, whereas externality is the condition of separation that hinders such interchange. Obviously, the terms are relative. Thus, while two individuals occupying the same room experience internality, they would also experience externality if they lacked a common language with which to communicate. Moreover, an individual's consciousness is an archetypal internal space to the extent that any person is at one with their awareness. Should an individual be subject to forces rooted in the unconscious or to hallucinations based on some mental disturbance, an external dysfunction can occur within that normally internalistic sphere.

Externality in and of itself is not some evil thing anymore than the separation of a newborn from its mother is a negative phenomenon. On the contrary, the externalization aspect of birth is a natural part of the growth process. However, should the newborn be neglected through a failure to provide a common space of nurturing support, externality has gone too far and autism can be the tragic result.

In the case of economics, internality and externality need to be brought to bear on theory for a balance to be achieved, but in a direction that is different from that of physics. Bacon in his *New Organon* pointed out how "theory spinning" without systematic involvement with the external world would only hinder scientific progress (Bacon 1960, 49, 58-59, 67-68, 98). Clearly, he was seeking a balance where theory entailed an over-emphasis on the internal defined as the common space of ideas linked together in some kind of abstract system with little connection to the external world. With economics, the crucial issue of common space pertains to the marketplace. It is not an intellectualized form of common space, but a material one where buyers and sellers come together for the purpose of (supposedly) mutually advantageous exchange. Money is usually the language or medium of communication, while supply and demand are the motivating dynamics associated with an externalist sense of lack or surfeit—externalist in the sense that deficiency or excess indicate being "outside of" a state of needs fulfilment. If balance really did occur, all those with something to give and those who were in need could be included in the common space of the market; but the obvious realities of unemployment, poverty, waste—not to mention cultural and environmental degradation—indicate that the internal and the external aspects of economic life exist in some kind of dysfunctional relationship. To the extent that economic theory reflects, articulates, ignores, or even normalizes this dysfunction, revision of basic principles would appear to be in order.

Neoclassical Economic Theory and the Externalistic Outlook

With the decline of socialist economies toward the end of the 1980s, capitalist economic theory was given a great boost. Neoclassical economics was built on the assumptions of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century economists.[2] The main rival to the neoclassical school is Keynesian economics, which was supposedly in vogue in the post-World War II era, although economists such as Louis-Philippe Rochon (1994) would argue that, at best, a "bastard-Keynesian" approach was adopted (61-66).[3] In any case, the worst excesses of Western capitalism may have been muted after the war, in part because of a strong communist rival still considered to be economically viable and the lack of serious economic competition from the non-Western world.

The problem with neoclassical theory is that it is at odds with reality, for it preaches a free-market panacea to all economic ills while unemployment, serious wealth disparities, and ecological dangers continually confront it, even when those sympathetic to neoclassical principles hold power. From my point of view, the out-of-touchness of neoclassical theory stems from its exclusively externalist orientation, which can be seen in its fundamental assumptions.

Individualism is the first assumption: neoclassical economics considers the world to be composed of atoms (persons, firms, households), each seeking to maximize its particular material interests. If externalism is marked by fragmentation, as opposed to the common space of internalism, clearly the assumption of atoms with diverse interests embodies an externalist perspective and denies or at least minimizes an internalist one in which community bonds and other interpersonal links play important roles. Indeed, if one lived in an economic environment that had more of an internalist dimension, such a common space, in allowing for more sharing and mutual support in difficult times, would preclude the insecurity-based orientation to maximization of personal interest. Why put in the more intense effort at maximizing one's advantage when there is a notable level of security based on a strongly developed sense of internality, that is, a sense of common, as opposed to, individualistic interest?

Scarcity is the second assumption of neoclassical theory.[4] From an externalist perspective, one always confronts the world as being outside of oneself. To fulfill one's desires, one has to take possession of that which is outside of oneself. But why is there never enough, especially within the framework of highly productive technology? In an attempt to understand this, let us consider an internalist perspective, where one has access to and enjoyment of internal goods. We share a common space with our ideas and feelings and can use these to create scientific theories, works of art, and even loving relationships. The external world can play a part here, but a sculptor, for example, does not require a maximal amount of marble to bring his or her internal reality to light. The point is that if one is somehow alienated from the internal, it is easy to understand how the external can become a kind of addictive substitute. One can never have enough because the external is functioning as a kind of substitute for an inaccessible sphere of internalist goods. In the manner of an addictive drug, one must always have more because the satisfaction is ultimately false, and quantity becomes an ineffective substitute for an unsatisfying qualitative experience. In its unbalanced emphasis on scarcity as a kind of norm, neoclassical theory ignores the potentially balancing realm of internal goods.

Rationality is the third assumption, and here neoclassical economics emphasizes the importance of rational calculation on the part of individuals seeking to satisfy their wants. At first, one might think that this rationality is neutral and might even provide the underpinning for a common space of logic and scientifically objective inquiry. Yet, as Marx and Engels point out in *The Communist Manifesto*, the "rationality" of capitalism is antagonistic to the more integrated common spaces of tradition, culture, and religion—common spaces despised by Marx and Engels but which embody a level of internality that the rationality of capitalism and neoclassical economics would see disappear (Marx and Engels 1992, 372-373). The capitalistic entrepreneur calculates in a rational manner how best to exploit a particular economic situation and will brook no opposition based on internalist considerations. Thus, while there is no denying an internalist dimension to rationality, the competitive and atomistic economic context in which it exists puts reason in the service of externality.

The fourth and final assumption of neoclassical economic theory is that of the self-adjusting marketplace in which supply and demand balance out automatically. As with the previous rationality assumption, the self-adjusting marketplace at first seems to embody the internalist principle of a common space that provides the opportunity to integrate a multitude of differing interests. Yet the internalistic potential of the marketplace is undermined to the extent that for some it acts like an alien power that forces individuals to bend to its dictates. The common space of an authentic internality would see the market respond not only to individual desires and circumstances but also to the good of the entire community understood in terms of facilitating a moral and spiritual growth. A common space that meets only material needs is not enough for an authentic internality.

Moreover, even in the material sense, the common space of the marketplace is far from perfect. Once the supply-demand pattern makes itself felt to a given participator in the marketplace, adjustments have to made. If they can be made easily, without undue hardship on the part of the participator, a common space may be operating to the extent that the marketplace functions as a place of inclusion. However, if the adjustments cannot be so easily made, the marketplace is functioning in an exclusive or externalist vein. The line between the two may be fine, but it is there and manifests itself in boom-bust cycles, unemployment, and business failures. While the idea of mutual profitability based on supply-demand balancing obviously works for some, it does not work for all; and in that sense the common space of the marketplace is not just limited but is also contributory to a punitive externality. For the neoclassical economists, such externality is meant to be motivating so that those who are outside must become more efficient in order to enter the common space. But, from the point of view of this discussion, such compulsion reveals a strong externalist emphasis.

Summing up, it is important not to overstate the weakness of neoclassical theory. The external world is a part of reality, and the economic principles founded on that theory are in touch with certain aspects of a functioning economy. The problem is that theory can become a kind of perceptual lens that blinds the viewer to other aspects of reality. If those aspects are internal in nature and the lens is biased only to the external, serious distortion is inevitable. Socio-economic dysfunctions are bound to be exacerbated rather than healed. The foregoing analysis has shown the externalist bias of neoclassical principles: (a) a competitively atomistic individualism; (b) an inescapable scarcity of material goods based on their functioning as addictive substitutes for an absent or impoverished internalist sphere; (c) a rationality destructive of internalist spaces associated with tradition; and (d) an exclusionary marketplace insensitive to a common good defined in more spiritual terms. What will be considered in the subsequent section is the principle of a more internalist approach to economic reality—a principle that will be contrasted with its externalistic counterpart. The stage will then be set for developing a more balanced economic theory in the contemporary context.

Interest and the Gift

We are so accustomed to the idea of wealth as personal property that it is hard to visualize an economics based on another principle. A different principle, however, is precisely what is found in the "gift cycle." Here one gives without contract or agreement, and yet a return is always forthcoming because the circulation of goods is part of tribal solidarity—the expression of an internalistic group unity, not of an externalistic personal possessiveness (Hyde 1983, 114-115). The link with interest is made clear by Hyde when he notes that the ancient Hebrews allowed usury, lending for a fee, with those outside the group, but not amongst group members—that is, those bound by common laws, religious beliefs, customs, traditions, and the like: "The idea of usury therefore appears when spiritual, moral, and economic life begin to be separated from one another, probably at the time when foreign trade, exchange with strangers, begins." Following on this, medieval Christianity assumed that usury and the brotherhood of all Christians were antithetical in principle (111, 119). Was not the body of all believers united in Christ and his Church? And was not unity a characteristic of the internal world, while usury reflected an externalistic hostility, distrust, or fundamental separation between individuals?

During the Reformation, the Christian view of lending for a fee changed. As Hyde points out, in order to manage their break with Rome, Protestants had to appeal to merchant princes who favoured an economic policy that allowed lending at interest. Having a strong doctrinal sense of human sinfulness, Protestant reformers saw Christian brotherhood more as an ideal than a reality, that is, more characteristic of a church congregation than of civil society. Hence the reformers could allow merchant princes to lend at interest because usury was viewed as part of an inherently sinful civil society. At the same time, usury and interest began to differentiate. While usury was a direct charge for the use of money, interest represented the income that creditors might have earned had they been in possession of the money themselves. The time of separation from one's wealth became a component in calculating what was owed to the creditor (Hyde 1983, 120, 123). Interest was taken as a more extreme form of usury, indicating a greater lack of faith in the group and hence a greater degree of externality. This is because every moment of separation from one's wealth is experienced as a negative that must be appropriately compensated. Had the common space of the group been strong enough, separation from one's wealth might not have generated the anxiety that required such compensation, and from that perspective interest may be associated with a kind of quasi-neurotic separation anxiety based on an increasing sense of externality and a diminishing sense of internality.

Although Martin Luther and the early church reformers saw interest as a necessary or inevitable evil, John Calvin agreed with it in principle so long as interest was collected according to the rules of equity. Hyde (1983) puts it as follows: "After the sixteenth century a brother is someone who will loan you money at the prime rate" (131-132). The internalistic bond of brotherhood, which had manifested itself in the gift, had clearly been lost, and a general sense of contractually specified equity became the key bond among people. Charity, of course, still existed, but it tended to reinforce class barriers since the charitable gift was merely a sop to the conscience and, unlike the more traditional circulating gift of pre-civilized cultures, did not integrate the receiver into the group (137-138).

While the gift represents an internalist perspective because it reinforces and expresses the unity of a group, interest, which is so central to our present economy, embodies the external in ways that go beyond a lack of trust. Interest, especially compound interest, is a mathematical entity known even to the Babylonians (Maor 1994, 23). In compounding, any unpaid amount of interest is added to the principal. Thus, subsequent calculations of interest take a percentage of the higher amount, not of the original amount of the loan. Moreover, the compounding period can be set at any interval.

These well-known concepts are essential for understanding the connection of compound interest with externality. First, the need to compound suggests a neurotic anxiety that separation from one's wealth is so terrible that one must be compensated many times over for the resulting pain. In a world of externalities, where one feels no meaningful connection to a larger whole, the need on the part of the lender to erect such a protective wall of wealth is understandable. For the borrower, there is also the extra anxiety associated with taking on a debt that can become quite crushing, thus making the borrower view the world as an intrinsically hostile place where supportive internal bonds are lacking.

Secondly, inasmuch as the geometric increase attendant upon compound interest mimics the growth process of the natural world (Dunham 1994, 172), the creditor, in claiming such interest, experiences a symbolic substitute for the power of life itself: growth is within the power of the creditor. Yet, to seek such power, even symbolically, the creditor must be suffering a profound sense of alienation from life's procreative aspect. And because alienation is symptomatic of the experience of externality, collecting interest can be interpreted as a symbolic ritual for overcoming that alienation and creating a substitute or false sense of internality, that is, a common space with life as growth. Because of the falsity, the ritual needs to be compulsively repeated in an endless quest for ever-higher rates of return, while an authentic connection with life as growth remains unrealized. What would characterize such an authentic connection? Because growth for a human ceases to be physical or external after reaching adulthood, it can only be internal, that is, an ongoing process of increasing one's emotional and intellectual relationships. Indeed, love of other and of wisdom are the most obvious embodiments of internality; and if more individuals experienced such an expansion of their common space with others, the need for an externalist substitute might accordingly diminish.

Thirdly, it is ironic that, as it increases geometrically, interest mimics the internalist unity of life, for the very way interest is calculated emphasizes the radical fragmentation of externality: the principal is subdivided into varying percentages or fragments; time itself is divided into as many fragments as there are compounding periods. From the perspective of internality or the unity of a common space, time is an illusion. From the internalist perspective of the gift, that which is given is less something to be divided into fragments than it is an expression of group solidarity. However, when money is given in the context of interest, illusions which should be undermined by the existence of mutually supportive interpersonal activity are instead strongly reinforced. Thus, interest, by its emphasis on a principal articulated by percentages and by a highly structured passage of time, involves individuals ever more intently in the reality of an externalistic world.

At present, many governments are crippled by the burdens of debt servicing. Yet so inured are we to the world of externality as the only reality, few of us would consider challenging such a system. If we cannot go back to the tribal group with its internalistic forms of wealth as gift, can we find a modern variant of internal wealth and thereby begin to re-establish a counterweight to the crushing form of externalistic wealth known as interest?

A Contemporary Strategy for Representing Internal Wealth

The key problem is to integrate internal and external forms of wealth (associated respectively with the ethos of gift and of interest) and not to downplay one at the expense of the other. Since internal means common space and external means separate or fragmented space, any integration project appears fraught with paradox. How can one integrate or create a common space with what is inherently an embodiment of otherness? The answer must be to establish a balance where each has its independent but complementary sphere. However, in order to accomplish this, the notion of internal requires an expansion beyond that of gift.

If external wealth represents goods and services that give us a certain power over the environment, internal wealth may be said to give us a sense of connection or greater unity with the environment. Thus, knowledge, while it has a practical or externalist dimension, also has a theoretical or internalist dimension that gives us insight into (a certain unity with) the world. Likewise, any service associated with care-giving, nurturing, supporting, healing, teaching, inspiring, etc., has a strong internal dimension to the extent that a common interpersonal space is facilitated. As this common space becomes stronger or more developed, it expands to include more people. Thus, in the manner of a gift, it is only a matter of time before some aspect of the knowledge-creating, care-giving, nurturing, supporting, etc., returns to the original giver. To put it simply, just as good begets good, internality begets internality, albeit in ever-widening circles that parallel the geometric increase associated with compound interest.

With this expanded version of internality, the problem of balancing the two forms of wealth may be reconsidered from the perspective of keeping the internal from being absorbed and undermined by the external. That is, if knowledge-creating and care-giving are part of the externalist market which seeks to build a wall of wealth and power around specific individuals (often at the expense of other individuals), the internalist dimension may be fatally weakened. For example, nurturing for the sake of profit undermines the intrinsic reward that the giver receives from the act and leads to a focus on an extrinsic reward. Likewise, the recipient of the nurturing can only feel that the gift was motivated by self-interest rather than love.

In order to avoid the potential corruption of the internal by the external, those in the society who are oriented toward the internal and/or cannot find a place in the realm of the external would be given a life-sustaining gift of economic support designed to pay for food, shelter, clothing, and a middle-class level of discretionary purchases (e.g., entertainment). While tax revenue drawn from the externalist economy might be an obvious funding source, recipients could also be afforded a line of credit for the basic elements of life. But, true to the newly defined gift cycle of internalist wealth, this credit would not require repayment in the sense that a loan would be repaid with earned income. It would be society's gift for the purpose of strengthening the internalist bonds that make a society more than a collection of independent atoms. While individuals living in this internalist space would be freed from worrying about the vagaries of the marketplace, they would also not have access to the world of high profits associated with amassing significant amounts of wealth.

At present, there is no real mechanism for such a presumably widespread bestowal of funds. Taxpayers and their representatives in government would understandably resent such largesse, especially if their own internalist sensibilities have only been weakly developed. Thus, to allay such misgivings, the funding allocation would have to possess a double nature. On the one hand, the grant would have to be in the form of real currency. On the other hand, the grant need not—and, indeed, should not—be drawn from funds circulating in the externalist system of wealth creation and distribution. That is, it could simply be currency which is printed and distributed to those identified as internalist wealth creators. (Alternatively, it could be electronically posted to designated bank accounts.) A bestowal of funds allowing internally oriented individuals to live reasonably well need not be a drain on the externalist system. If this seems like creation of money *ex nihilo* because the currency is not based on externalist goods and services (e.g., profits, gold, stored up labour), it is important to bear in mind that internalist goods and services are inherently spontaneous and selfless in nature: that is, they spring—or should spring, if they are truly authentic—from a love that wants for nothing external and, in that sense, entails a desire for no profit, no wealth-based security, and no interest-based recompense. While an internalist-based recompense (associated with an increase in the scope of the internalist sphere) is bound to be forthcoming, a true internalist never acts in expectation of some reward. Thus, just as internalist wealth comes from nothing external and is oriented to nothing external, its recompense should come from nothing external.

Internal wealth by its very nature comes from nothing external but from the underlying totality or unity of all things in which the internally oriented participate to varying degrees depending on their level of spiritual evolution. Thus, true internalist wealth is basically an expression of the ultimate common space or ultimate reality—unity—that spiritual masters have always claimed to be the foundation of all things. In other words, while *ex nihilo* funding is independent of the externalist circulation of goods and services, it reflects a dependence on or faith in a larger totality that is sensitive to the highest moral potentials of human beings.

How practical or feasible is such a balanced system, given the more than probable opposition to the principles outlined above? One can answer this question by considering a set of objections derived from an externalist outlook—objections pertaining to (1) inflationary pressures, (2) social stability, and (3) opposition from the socio-economic power elites constituting the status quo. While utopian fantasies tend to ignore such practical questions, one can only be suspicious of violent revolutions that corrupt themselves in the politics of domination. That is, as revolutionaries struggle with their oppressive antagonists, the former begin to adopt the dominative tactics of the latter, and the movement to freedom is compromised accordingly.

With regard to inflationary pressures, the obvious concern of neoclassical theorists is that the introduction of massive funding allocations would cause a corresponding devaluation of currency since too much money would be chasing too few goods. This monetarist view of inflation is challenged by Rochon, who argues that "inflation is a social disagreement on the appropriate distribution of income" (Rochon 1994, 109). Whether or not prices rise because those with the power to raise them desire greater profits, I doubt that funding for internalist wealth creators would cause inflationary pressure on the externalist sphere. First of all, grants would be controlled. They would not be given promiscuously but only to those who demonstrated both commitment to and capacity for pursuing internalist projects. For example, appropriately designated committees might assess such projects on the basis of: (a) the number of hours committed by the project managers; and (b) the numbers of people positively affected. Secondly, the number of grants would be limited in such a way that the society's externalistic surplus would not be drained away by a vast number who made no direct contribution to the creation of externalistic wealth. In this regard, one could envisage such monitoring as part of a new role to be played by economists in a more balanced society. Finally, because it is hard to imagine inflation in a technologically advanced society that is easily capable of producing a surplus, these internalist fund allocations could stimulate, not drain, the economy.

All who had the desire and qualifications for internalist work might easily be accommodated without contributing to an inflationary upsurge. Along these lines, Georges Bataille (1991) notes that surplus and excess is the true law of nature—a law that neoclassical theory with its emphasis on scarcity ignores (19-41). With an ever-burgeoning externalist technology that has increased, not diminished, the possibilities for expressing this natural exuberance, inflation reflects some kind of economic dysfunction; and, in that sense, the fear of inflation is based on reality. My point here is that, if the economy is altered to favour a greater balance between internal and external forms of wealth creation, the fear of inflation would have no real basis in fact.

Turning to the question of social stability, a fear of traditional economists is the temptation of many individuals to turn to the internalist sphere as a way of avoiding the dirty work, that is, externalistic work associated with drudgery, discomfort, and/or low pay. Does not society depend on this kind of labour and would not workers become overly restive or hostile if they perceived an alternative that offered the greater satisfactions associated with internalist wealth creation?

In response to this danger, access to the internalist sphere is controlled by economic managers on the basis of certain set criteria such as competence, commitment, as well as the supply of externalist goods and services. Also we must not assume that all people who are discontented with their role in the externalist economy will automatically seek positions in the internalist one, which has its own unique set of challenges. Finally, a growing internalist sphere can only serve to stabilize society by increasing the number of individuals whose primary function would be to care for and offer support to the disaffected—be they those who have only a marginal place in the external economy or those who suffer from its many pressures. At present, the neoclassical emphasis on the importance of self-reliant individuals ignores those who for whatever reason cannot fit into externalist marketplace.

As for the objection associated with a fatal opposition to these proposals, socio-economic power elites need not be threatened by a more balanced system of wealth creation and distribution that is non-inflationary and encourages stability. Moreover, there is no need to disempower or dispossess the major players whose key interest is in upholding the status quo. A gradual approach is suggested as internalist outlooks begin to spread throughout the society. If these unifying tendencies proliferate widely and a broader internalist sphere is accordingly engendered, one can imagine a time when proponents of dominative strategies for organizing society will be secure enough to consider alternatives. Whereas an exclusively externalist approach to wealth creation and distribution often inspires anger, resentment, and contempt because it seems to brook no opposition, this hostility might be transformed into appreciation if the externalist sphere is reconsidered as a necessary complement to another dimension of being, the sphere of the internal. Leaders of an externalist status quo are unlikely to be seriously opposed to a balanced worldview that values them in a more authentic way that takes nothing from them and emphasizes how only a greater good can flow from truly maximizing the range of free human activity.[5]

Conclusion

Organizing an economy on the basis of balancing internal and external forms of wealth must be understood within a larger historical context. When internal wealth was focussed on the circulating gift, the emphasis was on the unity of the group drawn together by the values of sharing and unselfishness. The internal world was simple because any development within the sphere of internality would undermine or threaten the integrity of the group. The extent to which the sphere of internality was limited may be seen in the extent to which nature was seen as a realm of capricious gods with whom little in the way of common space could be established. Thus, change could only take place gradually and within the sphere of the external—the world of objects, of otherness, of fragments, and of logical and sequential causality that could provide a basis for linking together those fragments. As the world of externality became ever-more overt and complex, the internality that centred on group solidarity began to break down until, at the present time, the very existence of the internal world became suspect. Historically, internalistic simplicity relented to externalistic complexity.

Projecting this trajectory forward, my discussion suggests that the next stage of historical evolution might be one characterized by internalistic complexity. In a world where internal wealth has a recognized place in a balanced economy, internality is expressed in projects of unification that are inherently complex because they must take into account a proliferation of knowledge, a well-developed externalistic structure, and a multitude of unique individuals. The goal of unity or establishing a common space is not meant to abolish these elements but to enhance them by discovering and creating varied interconnections. Indeed, that might well be one of the tasks of a new breed of economic manager, who seeks to maintain an ever-so-subtle balance between external and internal forms of wealth.

Beyond the realm of internalistic complexity lies the more distant possibility of a world characterized by externalistic simplicity—that for which Thoreau longed at Walden Pond and which was based on quasi-mystical oneness with all things. In other words, as the common space of internalistic complexity becomes more rooted in human consciousness, one can foresee a time when the vast array of externals, currently deemed so necessary for a decent life, becomes less relevant. Technology is not meant to disappear in this new context, but to become redeployed in the task of simplifying the externalist aspects of life so that we may be less distracted from the infinite ultimate reality that lies within and quietly awaits us in our ongoing evolution.[6]

Summing up, I have outlined the structure of a possible balance between two forms of wealth. Instead of the unbalanced structures of internalist simplicity and externalist complexity, I put forward the idea of internalist complexity and an externalist simplicity, with the latter predicated upon the former. These two possibilities of balance must be consciously sought, but they can only be realized by giving free range to the full gamut of human potential. In this regard, it is important to recognize that the present system of unbalanced externalist complexity does not offer such freedom. With respect to the prevailing myth of an invisible hand that, despite much evidence to the contrary, is supposed to balance supply and demand in the marketplace, the externalistic bias of the market and the desire of power-holders to maintain that bias actually prevent the hand from doing its most important work—the work of allowing a more authentic balance between internal and external to emerge. Inasmuch as the foregoing trajectory has a kind of logic—internalist simplicity, externalist complexity, internalist complexity, and externalist simplicity—one can entertain a certain hope that human civilization is moving, not towards ruin and spiritual darkness, but instead towards growth and spiritual enlightenment. An economics that is sensitive to ultimate reality, characterized by a balance between its internal and external aspects, can only facilitate such a journey.

Notes

1. A frightening introduction to the ecological crisis may be found in Hartmann (1999).
2. An instructive summary of the major classical economists is provided by Sowell (1974, 3-32).
3. According to Rochon, the essence of Keynesianism is not some quick-fix, make-work project, but "socialized investment" under the auspices of the state. Private investment, in view of market uncertainties, could not, by some automatic mechanism, guarantee full employment. In that sense, Keynes saw the state as a tool for the good of all, not a device whereby the privileged manage the economy in their own self-interest.
4. An interesting discussion of scarcity can be found in Xenos (1989, 67-81).
5. In this regard, Alan Haworth (1994) points out the false view of freedom held by people associated with the neoclassical position. In effect, such individuals consider freedom from a purely negative perspective, where no direct interference with one's actions constitutes freedom. Indirect interference, however, is closely bound up with a capitalist economy. One might be able to exploit such commitments to freedom by channelling them in a more positive and less self-serving direction (12-31).
6. One is tempted to speculate here that certain forms of extreme religious fundamentalism embody a reactive internalist simplicity in response to the extreme forms of externalist complexity that characterize the economy of so-called developed nations.

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