

Chapter 9

Is Business Wise in the 21st Century?

INTRODUCTION

The question is: Will business end or revive Western civilization? In order to answer this question, we must ask whether Western civilization can transform from Malthusian growth traps to sustainability within a few decades, which would require the successful transformation from *paranoia* to *metanoia*?

According to several authors, Western civilization has been at a crossroads since the 20th century, developing vastly in the process of industrialization and as a result, passing through negative cultural challenges. Among them one can notice

issues of war and peace, income inequalities, governmental indifference, social autism, and isolation. Very rarely is the role of business in these issues analyzed. This is ironic, since business in capitalism is religion, of which the first commandment is profit through growth by any means. But business is the most powerful social institution in the world and its role in civilizational development must be analyzed. This investigation aims to evaluate the role of business in finishing or reviving Western civilization.

Civilizations are born, rise, grow, decline, and transform, as does Western civilization, whose business system plays a key role as a world-system that is copied by other civilizations as the supposedly best pattern to follow. This pattern

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-60960-168-3.ch009

has been designed by the strategy of growth, which will be reviewed through 6,000 years of civilization. Its current stage will be exemplified, with the conclusion that commercial capitalism transformed in the second part of the 20th century into managerial capitalism, global capitalism, and turbo capitalism. In effect, Western civilization is quickly transforming into a Global civilization, with all consequences for transformation of values, symbols, and patterned behaviors of its habitants.

The Global civilization is at this moment in a “war for wealth,” which rapidly depletes strategic resources to satisfy the fast growth of the world population. These two factors, population growth and business growth, are leading the planet to the brink of disaster. If civilization wants to survive, it must apply the strategy of sustainable development to get out from the Death Triangle of Civilization. This will be more obvious to humans around 2050, although its symptoms, e.g., rising shortages of strategic resources, declining ecology, and the growing footprint of population, are presently evident at the dawn of the 21st century.

Knowledge about the declining potential of the Earth is rising among intellectuals, NGOs, and the United Nations, but governments and politicians are less involved in the process of protecting the well-being of the planet. Instead of blaming others, this investigation argues that the college faculty teaches and researches business according to the wrong paradigms, and this should be changed urgently to be sure that future professionals will know what kind of decisions they should make in order to support sustainable development of a common Universal civilization.

CIVILIZATIONS RISE, GROW, DECLINE, AND TRANSFORM

The first humans, whose brains weighted 500 cc, populated the Earth about six million years ago; however, it was only 6,000 years ago they began to live as civilized people with much bigger

brains of 1350 cc. During the last six millennia, humans developed about 26 natural civilizations (Toynbee, 1995) and two planned civilizations, the Soviet and Nazis (Targowski, 2009). We currently experience eight religion-oriented civilizations (Western, Eastern, Chinese, Japanese, Islamic, Hindu, Buddhist, and African) and one economy-oriented civilization, the newly emerging Global civilization. A concept of the emerging civilizations is shown in Figure 1.

The process of civilizing humans passes through cycles of genesis, growth, breakdown, and disintegration (Toynbee, 1995). Such pioneers of civilization study such as Spengler (1962), Kroeber (1944, 1957), Coulborn (1954, 1966), Grey (1958), Quigley (1961), Melko (1969), Sanderson (1995), Snyder (1999), and Blaha (2002) agree that civilizations rise, grow, and decline. However, each of these authors uses their own specific terms for each phase or stage, which varies from a few to several. But Sorokin (1957) criticizes the “death of civilization” idea because there is much continuity in cultural behavior from the dying civilization to the emerging one. Therefore, Wilkinson (1987) argues that 13 major civilizations that had the ability to connect with each other, have transformed into one central civilization, which is transforming into the Global civilization in the present day. In the spirit of this hypothesis, Targowski (2009, p. 48) developed a concept of civilization continuity under the form of shared memory, showing an example of the evolving Western civilization (Figure 2).

These three last authors (Blaha, Wilkinson, and Targowski) argue that civilizations never die because many (though not necessarily all) of their contributions are passed on to succeeding civilizations. For example, the Classical civilization is alive in spirit and in worldview today. There are exceptions to this rule, as is the case with “arrested civilizations.” However, they have transformed themselves into another mutation or generation. If civilizations transform, it means

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