

# An inquiry into human nature and the cost of the wealth of nations

## Addressing global systems failure through an integral systems paradigm for sustainable development

David E. Martin

Received: 20 August 2012 / Accepted: 8 February 2013  
© Springer-Verlag London 2013

**Abstract** Current economic ontology development has failed to confront two important errors associated with historicism. Embracing the linearity of economic value being directly attributed to the labor applied to natural resources taken together with efficiency arguments used to justify monetary policy on both the microlevel (transaction) and macrolevel (global trade), we know these legacies of the scientific method applied to economic systems have left the G-20 paralyzed to deal with structural failings evidenced from banking to business to economic policy. An exploration of the structural modalities that impair our current capacity for adaptation and alternative methods for accounting for value is the basis for this inquiry. Integral accounting is proposed as a more suitable method to transition from scarcity-based market models to abundance-based modes of sustainable engagement.

**Keywords** Economic systems · International stability

### 1 Introduction

Setting into motion the moral apology for the subsequent two and one half-centuries of industrial hegemonic violence and ideological propaganda—animated by struggles for “resources” and “labor”—postmodernism has yet to

challenge Adam Smith’s doctrine of dominion upon which his entire *Inquiry* is based. Erwin Schrödinger, a 1933 Nobel Laureate for his work in quantum mechanics, lamented, “There is a tendency to forget that all science is bound up with human culture in general, and scientific findings, even those which at the moment appear most advanced and esoteric and difficult to grasp, are meaningless outside their cultural context” (Schrödinger 1952). As culture recontextualizes normative memes, it is errant to seek application of social, economic, or physical sciences from one period to constrain the innovation called for at times of transition.

Awash in the tsunami of systemic dislocation misnamed a “Global Financial Crisis,” it is reasonable to critique our structural assumptions and consider the adequacy of our current general theories and their corollaries. As we observe the carbon-loving algae and lichens currently thriving in the thawing tundra courtesy of the greenhouse gases humans emit, we can observe our climate calamities, like our financial ones, are only apocalyptic to our way of seeing the world—not the speciation terminus they are frequently portrayed to portend. Humanity’s affinity for self-destructive myths, neither new in our day nor readily disarmed, makes them no more empirically true today than they have been with each passing eclipse since the beginning of heliocentric myth millennia ago. Perturbations in the consensus performance of systems afford rare opportunities to consider whether our challenges are essential or merely evidence of the outdated social optics prepared for paradigm shifts (Kuhn 1970).

Our present economic and social dissociative disorders were in full virulence during the Reagan/Thatcher era of protectionism when nationalist procurements disguised as trade modernization under the WTO. On the one hand touting “free-market” supremacy all the while creating gross industry-specific intervention, the economic policies

---

D. E. Martin (✉)  
M-CAM, Inc., 210 Ridge McIntire Road, Suite 300,  
Charlottesville, VA 22903, USA  
e-mail: dem@m-cam.com  
URL: www.m-cam.com