

“Love, Fear and the Destiny of Nations” by Richard Barrett.

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In this excellent book, Barrett tackles one of the most important—but sadly most ignored—national and global issues: how best to measure levels of satisfaction or dissatisfaction amongst members of a national society and how best to actually define these concepts. Rather than focussing solely on economic indicators such as Gross Domestic Product (GDP), governments are today just beginning to look deeper at this issue. But, as Barrett argues, even their new approaches are inadequate and likely to mislead. As he says, “The shift in focus of measurement from development as economic growth to development as human well-being, and more recently to development as human happiness is to be welcomed, but it is not enough. We need to move directly to *development as the evolution of human consciousness*.”

Barrett suggests “that we measure our personal values, the values we see in our communities and nations, and the values we would like to see in our communities and nations. In this way we can evaluate the degree to which our personal values are in alignment with the values of the human groups structures to which we belong... and the degree to which these group structures satisfy our deficiency and growth needs”.

His premise is that nations—not just individuals—proceed through a universal sequence of developmental stages. Just as individuals move towards ever deepening self-actualisation and individuation, so nations are moving, generally speaking, towards both ever-deepening democracy, and ever-larger social units. For nations, these three stages are 1. Becoming viable and independent; 2. Bonding to form a group structure [i.e. deepening democracy within the nation]; and 3. Cooperating to form a higher-order [international] entity.

Over the long-term, Barrett shows that nations are generally following this developmental sequence which leads from highly authoritarian government towards increasingly democratic government; some nations of course being more advanced in that process than others. The latest and most visible example of this evolution would be the Arab Spring under which hitherto authoritarian and conformist cultures are evolving towards modernism, self-determination and the beginnings of democracy. In the bigger evolutionary picture, having moved from families to tribes to Middle Age small-states to nation-states, the mounting global challenges we now face require, Barrett argues, a further move in that evolutionary sequence; first, he suggests, to a further consolidation of international regional groupings such as the EU, followed ultimately by some form of binding global governance.

This evolution of outer institutions of governance towards ever-larger scales is, according to Barrett, merely a reflection of people’s deepening *inner* level of consciousness; that is, people’s values and worldviews have steadily broadened from caring only about oneself or one’s immediate locality (ego/ethno-centric), to caring about all those within one’s country (nation-centric), to caring about the whole of humanity and the planet (world-centric). As Barrett is surely right to point out, today’s world problems won’t be solved unless our level of

consciousness (our way of thinking, values and worldview) moves from its present, predominantly ethno- or nation-centric level to a genuinely world-centric level.

The book offers a multitude of survey data showing relative levels of “cultural fear” (anxiety, dissatisfaction) or “love” (happiness, satisfaction) within national populations, concluding that the Nordic countries (Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden) evidence the lowest levels of cultural fear while nations in South and Central America have the highest. A great deal of interesting data is presented and the conclusions drawn generally seem to make very good sense. Governments, if they really care about their peoples, would do well to take careful note of Barrett’s methods and approach.

National values analysis is a very new field of study, but while Barrett is clearly one of its pioneers, there is much more work to be done and further considerations to be taken into account, particularly when considering how nations should work together to solve today’s increasingly urgent global problems.

Barrett is surely right that cultural fear in a national population arises from one of two possible sources; either internal or external. But measuring and evaluating this seems to be fraught with potential pitfalls, which don’t seem to have been part of Barrett’s evaluation. What may be overlooked, here, is that the accuracy of any results will surely depend on the level of consciousness, not only of those being surveyed, but more importantly of those doing the survey.

For if those being surveyed are at a nation-centric level of consciousness, as most people in Western cultures are, they will tend to see the problem of outrageous banker’s bonuses, for example, as simply resulting from bankers’ greed and politicians’ negligence in failing to adequately regulate. People’s dissatisfaction, in other words, will be perceived as arising from purely *internal*, national causes. This will lead them to simply blame their bankers and politicians. And if those doing the survey are at a similar level of consciousness, they will interpret any results in a similar light.

But if you are one of the relatively few people at a higher, *world*-centric level of consciousness, you will realise that the level of bankers’ bonuses is determined, not so much by bankers’ individual greed, but largely by global market forces; that is, by whatever is the highest available pay for that job globally. That’s because, if banks in one country failed to pay top bonuses, they’d only lose their top people to banks elsewhere that do. While no one would deny that individual greed plays a role, nor that markets are man-made constructs for which we are all ultimately responsible, the free-movement of capital across national borders today presents us with a far more complex, supra-national problem. Moreover, it’s a problem which deeply affects politicians too. For if the government in one country moved to stringently regulate its banks, those banks would only move their operations abroad to less regulated financial centres, so causing massive unemployment and an enormous loss of tax revenue. Indeed, they would have to do so in order to stay competitive.

With this deeper, world-centric perspective, then, it’s easy to see why regulation remains weak and why the problem of banker’s bonuses—like much else—remains largely unaddressed. Indeed we see that the problem, and the main source of the cultural fear, is not actually

national (or internal) but *global* (i.e. external). The point, then, is that unless both surveyor and surveyed are at a *world*-centric level of consciousness, the wrong conclusions are likely to be drawn.

Barrett, I feel, is in danger of succumbing precisely to this pitfall in concluding that the public's present widespread disillusionment with politics is almost exclusively due to corrupt, self-serving politicians; that is, to *internal* causes: "Democracy is not alive and well in most nations", he says, "because our political leaders are failing us. They operate with self-authoring minds, pursuing their own beliefs and agendas, incapable of seeing the world in any other way than through their own self-serving belief systems".

While few would argue that politicians are often self-serving, Barrett seems not to see that in today's global market, politicians actually have little choice but to implement policies that keep their nation internationally competitive; policies, in other words, which tend to *favour* the rich, the markets, and transnational corporations and, by the same token, *disfavour* ordinary people and the environment. It should hardly surprise us, then, that politicians of whatever party, once in office, inevitably end up pursuing broadly the same market- and business-friendly agenda and that, to voters, one party consequently looks much like another. It's little wonder, in other words, that our politicians look bad, democracy seems to be failing, and we have increasing voter apathy!

The point, then, is that with this deeper, world-centric perspective we start to see that there are important *external* causes; that the externally caused need of all politicians to keep their economies internationally competitive has a very important and detrimental *internal* effect on the quality of national politics itself. But if you, yourself, are not yet at a world-centric level of consciousness, you will not see this. This crucial issue appears not to have been highlighted sufficiently, as the author's conclusions cite merely internal, nation-centric causes; causes which although perhaps partially true, reveal only a small part of the full global reality.

Clearly, then, if the views of respondents to surveys are to be interpreted correctly, it is vital that at least the surveyors themselves should be at a sufficiently high level of consciousness. If they are not, not only will their surveys be poorly designed, their interpretation of some of the data is likely to be of questionable value.

Barrett's view of the European Union (EU) as a model other regional international groups of nations, such as ASEAN or the African Union, should follow is another area which could be questioned. The appropriateness of the European model in the light of the on-going Euro crisis is not questioned by Barrett. Indeed, he gives it unqualified support: "It is my belief that it is in the our interests to support the evolution of the EU, because this experience of international cooperation could well form the evolutionary template that allows nations in other regions of the world to come together in a spirit of cooperation so that we can eventually create a higher order global governance structure that supports the evolution of humanity."

For Barrett, then, there is apparently no contradiction or irony between his deep belief in democracy and the tighter integration now being forced, effectively undemocratically and under duress, upon many Euro nations and their peoples. Rather than seeing the crisis as a defeat for democracy at the hands of the herd mentality of global markets, he seems to view it

benignly; as the EU nations “giving up even more of their national sovereignty to the higher order authority of the European Union. This, for me”, he continues, “represented evolution in action a group of nations facing up to the difficulties of becoming a higher order entity ... and choosing to deepen their sense of connection.”

The author’s unequivocal support for the EU seems to be grounded in his view that some form of global governance can never emerge unless strong international regional groupings emerge *first*. But he does not say *why*. After all, even today we have some global institutions such as the United Nations and the World Trade Organisation even if, as Barrett rightly points out, they are flawed and unfit for purpose. Moreover, far from the Euro crisis representing a benign deepening integration of the Eurozone, it surely demonstrates the far more urgent need for global governance; that is, for a binding system of global governance capable of stopping global bond markets from consuming one nation after another.

Indeed, Barrett himself recognises that “The root cause of our current impasse is that *the problems of the human existence have become global, whereas the societal structures we have for dealing with them are national*” [his emphasis]. So one would have thought that any grouping that is *less* than global was always bound to be inadequate. And inadequate, surely, is what the EU is presently showing itself to be. So why, one wonders, is Barrett so attached to the idea that such inherently inadequate regional international groupings must emerge before some form of global governance? Just because the UN and other institutions are unfit surely cannot mean that no other models or possibilities for global governance are available. Indeed, with global problems mounting all around us, humanity simply doesn’t have the luxury of waiting further decades for fully appropriate regional models of governance to evolve first. The destructive power of global bond markets to effectively reduce many of Europe’s nation-states to economic basket-cases surely shows that we must move much more *directly* to some form of global governance, and quickly. What is arguably lacking, then, is not better or more robust *regional* models of inter-governmental cooperation, but good *global* models!

The problem in devising a truly appropriate system of global governance is, of course, that we too easily imbue that idea with our preconceived notions of *national* governance. We too easily imagine some monolithic global state with a huge central bureaucracy. But this need not necessarily be the case. As has been argued elsewhereⁱ, a far looser yet adequate form of cooperative global governance based on all (or sufficient) nations implementing agreed policies simultaneously could provide the necessary global legislative coverage *without* the need for a centralised global government. Moreover, and as has also been demonstrated, citizens can use their votes in a very new, powerful and transformative way to drive politicians and governments to cooperate on such a project, so providing a vital and powerful electoral incentive for politicians which is sorely lacking in today’s international treaty negotiations and is surely another reason for their routine failure.

Furthermore, if multiple issues were dealt with in such an agreement, nations that may lose on one issue could gain on another. For example, if a currency transactions (Tobin) tax were negotiated alongside a carbon emissions agreement, the big losers on the carbon agreement could be compensated by proceeds from the tax. Cutting their carbon emissions dramatically could thus be made to be in the self-interest of high-carbon nations such as China, the USA and others. This would vastly improve the chances of all nations cooperating meaningfully instead

of present, UN-sponsored efforts which, because they deal with one issue alone, are virtually guaranteed to fail.

An approach based on simultaneous international action that includes trade-offs between multiple issues also means that the vastly divergent values and political systems we see across the world could more easily be reconciled. For an agreement based on simultaneous action does not require the formation of some monolithic global state. Rather, it is based on simple, pragmatic self-interest created by suitable trade-offs that make cooperation in everyone's interests. Here, even the most repressive and undemocratic of governments or regimes are, if offered the right deal, capable of seeing what is in their own self-interest. Thus one could envisage global cooperation occurring *without* the pre-existence of robust international regional groupings, *without* democracy having to exist in all nations, and without, most importantly, needing to wait centuries for it all to evolve. The fact that we are now moving, as Barrett agrees, into the era of *conscious* evolution means that we need not pursue the rather linear approach outlined by Barrett, but could move much more directly and intelligently to the global level; to a system of binding cooperative global governance capable of dealing with today's global threats.

Such a model of simultaneous global governance may sound odd or unrealistic to some. But as Barrett points out (paraphrasing Einstein), "we will not solve global problems with the same nation-centric thinking that created them". All in all, then, although it suffers from a somewhat nation-centric focus, this book represents a very important step forward in our thinking about values and the role they play in governance. For anyone in the field of governance, this book is certainly very well worth the read.

ⁱ *Transcending First-tier Values in achieving Democratic Global Governance*, due for publication in *The Journal of Integral Theory & Practice* later in 2012.