

Creating a System That Reflects Our Own Values

Alison Wakelin
January 5, 2015



Recurrent woes are symptomatic of an underlying problem, and Unificationists are experiencing issues with stewardship of external resources. This has potential to create deep rifts unless we manage the transition from a system where a leader could remove manpower and resources from any project at a moment's notice, and place both elsewhere. In moving beyond continued emergency status, we must establish stability and settlement in accordance with our own

values.

The Western world is struggling with its relationship with the creation, just as are Unificationists. Americans and Europeans are facing a new reality of poverty and real challenges to economic growth. We find ourselves trapped in a system where governments have caused the population to become dependent on government income and support, and we seem powerless to go beyond this state of affairs.

But there are solutions, and we must look clearly, then make the requisite changes.

Firstly, women especially do not find it acceptable that any person should be impoverished and left to die by a system that demands they must work in order to survive, and yet cannot come up with enough jobs, let alone reasonable incomes. We cannot accept that humans should be thrown away because they didn't work hard enough. A reasonable distribution is not a distant goal to be desired, but an immediate reality that must be accomplished.



Alison Wakelin

When it comes to inequality, people get upset (depending on where they are in the distribution), but so far none of the attempts to put things right have worked. This is because any plan encompassing the ownership of property comes up against very deeply hidden barriers.

Historically, there was plenty of land and villages could easily be arranged so that each householder had access to land and the crops he could grow. Simple arrangements for simpler times – and simplicity is usually the best guide even when things seem to have gotten very complicated.

These simple arrangements were not complicated by a burgeoning population or by the industrial revolution, for example, so much as by a ruling monarch who saw his control being potentially eroded as a merchant class grew, or as others in society began to assert their own rights.

Monarchs historically simply took the land, and gave it to the wealthy noblemen, thereby creating the “landed gentry” class as a means to keep them from taking more power. These landowners thus owed their private ownership of land to a right granted by government, making them dependent upon the good will of the state. This has continued as the basis for private ownership of land to this day. Government has triumphed over nature in matters of ownership, to the extent that now most people never even question the right to own land. However, this ownership is not based on labor, on good stewardship, or on natural rights. Government now grants the right to ownership based on wealth.

Therefore when we confront the issue of distribution of land and natural resources, we are facing the issue of power and control.

Capitalism has never gone beyond the “trickle down” theory which few believe in anymore, because money is clearly perceived to trickle up these days, and it takes a very die-hard capitalist to presume that all but the top 0.1% are lazy good-for-nothings. Socialism hasn’t worked in any of its manifestations, since taking from the rich to give to the poor so often leads to resentment and dependency.

What salient points are being missed?

I suggest we are facing a crucial point: there is a debt of “sin” remaining from the early days in America when the traditional respect for and spiritual sensitivity towards nature among the indigenous peoples was destroyed by the European settlers. The land is not inert and without internal identity, and therefore is capable of participating in a relationship with those who live on it. Instead, it has been regarded as something to be exploited and dominated for our use.

This underlying void in the Western nature in turn evolved from the European drive for expansionism, taking land and resources without care or respect for others. This is not a statement that all colonialism was wrong, but rather that it was undermined by such flawed motivations, and thenceforth manipulated into the current outstanding injustices.

Here of course we realize the power of Unificationism to point out the underlying flaws. Divine Principle states that all of creation has a dual nature, both internal and external. It is the first among the monotheistic religious traditions to recognize this.

Nature has provided the land, natural resources, the tendency of seeds to grow when supplied with soil and water, rain, soil, air, oceans, living beings...there is no end. Even the most conservative estimate has determined that nature provides at least 50% of the wealth in any economy. Who, then, owns this?



Nature clearly does not discriminate. If we acknowledge our identity as spiritual beings then there can be no doubt that each of us has a natural right to this wealth, even before we start to do any labor to increase the wealth. Indigenous peoples tended to recognize this, since they had not conceived of the idea of owning the land or nature, and this is what the European settlers destroyed when they ended the Native American way of life.

Poor people, then, have been disenfranchised by our system, not shown up as failures in it. There is systemic discrimination and injustice that creates victims, because a human being is entitled to a share of nature, not because she works for it, but because she is a human being.

America has turned into a rentier economy where it is much more profitable to fundraise from the government than to actually produce something and engage in capitalistic enterprise. The increase in value of land, brought about by the whole, is appropriated into private hands by land owners, while the people whose labor created the wealth face a heavy tax on income. The government has turned into a predator, in the U.S. and Europe, and those countries who have been forced by the financial invasion of the West into some form of capitalistic material-based economics.

Capitalism is great, if its underlying injustices are addressed. Socialism is inevitable if they are not, and redistributive taxation follows whereby labor is taxed, making no sense since we want to encourage labor. Wealth, acquired through speculation and ownership of the products of nature such as land and natural resources, is taxed at a far lower level. While speculation is rewarded, wages tend to a minimum, and those not born into opportunity are forced into wage slavery and devastating poverty.

Poor people, then, have been disenfranchised by our system, not shown up as failures in our system. There is systemic discrimination and injustice that creates victims, because a human being is entitled to a share of nature – not because she works for it, but because she is a human being. Even a simple tax on the use of nature would serve a fairer distributive function than an income tax.

A new class of the super rich has emerged and consolidated financial power, completely walled off from the economic disaster affecting everyone else, and ideally suited to take advantage of other's distress. They have made unbelievable fortunes due to their special relationship with government, taking over banks, the legal system and alarmingly high rates of land ownership at the same time. In Scotland today, for example, 432 people own half of the private rural land in the whole country. Ownership turns out to be very hard to determine. Why? Because that is how rich people become richer and avoid public scrutiny.

The government itself becomes a predator, finding itself in debt and forced to extend the social safety net to a wider percentage of society. The middle class, having lost their land, find themselves subject to ever-increasing taxation to feed the hungry government, which having taken power over the right of ownership of the land and natural resources, has thereby taken ownership of people's thoughts.

Any new system – and we must have a new system now in order to move forward – must return a voice and some responsibility to the individual for the activity of the whole. It must also clarify everyone's basic right to the fulfillment of survival needs. No one should experience loss of the right to basic housing and food security for any reason, and neither should this be considered a handout from the government, since it is the inalienable birthright of any human being, given freely by nature.

The people can collectively choose to create a system based on a just distribution and the values of distributed empowerment and the right to use of the land.

As a first step, it would be a good idea to write a Bill of Economic Rights and Responsibilities. While we are collectively stewards of the land in some way, nature didn't go as far as providing the housing and infrastructure we need to survive, so it's not all rights, we have to figure out how to distribute the responsibility for the infrastructure too.

Secondly, the Green Party in Europe is seriously considering a "Citizens' Income" as a way to ensure that each person captures his or her right to the use of some small part of nature throughout their whole life on earth. If everyone receives this, it ceases to be redistributive and instead helps prevent the capturing of the economic rent on the part of the very few at the expense of the many.

As Unificationists we need to create a system that reflects our own values. We must make decisions which empower the self, and support all efforts to do the same, until those in power see the value of an empowered membership.

Unificationists all accepted the need for emergency status over the last few decades, but now we need to let go of a system that enables a leader to pull the funding or manpower from under any enterprise at a moment's notice. This is contributing to general poverty among members. Do we want to create a movement where families struggle to be responsible to educate and raise their children, while those in charge continue to disempower everybody just simply to preserve a way of operating with which they probably do not truly agree?

Alison Wakelin (UTS Class of 1989) has a M.A. in Astrophysics from Princeton University, and is currently a Senior Lecturer in Physics and Astronomy at Widener University in Chester, Pennsylvania. Previously, she lived and worked in Korea for ten years