

BEYOND THE GARDEN MIND?

**What the next stage of
human consciousness has
to say about UK politics**

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About Compass and this project

Compass is the pressure group for a good society, a world that is much more equal, sustainable and democratic. We build alliances of ideas, parties and movements to help make systemic change happen. Our strategic focus, through the [Common Platform](#), is to understand, build, support and accelerate new forms of democratic practice and collaborative action that are taking place in civil society and the economy, and to link that up with top-down/state reforms and policy. The question we are trying to help solve, which we explore in the recent document [45 Degree Change](#), is not just what sort of society we want, but, increasingly, how to make it happen?

Introduction

Frederic Laloux published 'Reinventing Organizations: A Guide to Creating Organizations Inspired by the Next Stage of Human Consciousness' in 2014. The thesis of Laloux's book is that:

- Over the last 100,000 years of human history there have been 5 stages in the development of human consciousness, as expressed by the worldview, the needs, and the cognitive and moral development of humanity.
- Two more stages of human consciousness have developed recently, the most recent being, what he calls, the Evolutionary-Teal stage.
- Alongside each stage of human consciousness, a new model of organisations has developed.

In July 2020 Compass published '[Garden Mind: An eco-system view of change and a different role for the state](#)' by Sue Goss. In this publication, Goss points to the need to move from a society shaped "as if it was a machine" to one which is shaped by 'gardeners'. The purpose of this paper is to try to place both the 'machine' and the 'garden mind' metaphors into the history of the development of human consciousness as explained by Laloux, and to consider whether, in relation to UK politics today, what is known about the latter points to something beyond the garden mind. For his book Laloux researched 12 organisations which he believed were operating as Evolutionary-Teal organisations, and I will use Laloux's research to explore my purpose for this paper. I do this on the basis that new political and societal models have developed at each stage of human consciousness, alongside organisational models, and that this will also happen as more stages unfold.

The first five stages of human consciousness

In Laloux's explanation of the stages of human consciousness, the machine is the 'guiding metaphor' for the fifth stage which he calls the Achievement-Orange stage. As Sue Goss suggests, this stage represents arguably the dominating worldview of most leaders in business and politics today. It has led to the 'command and control' of the previous stage changing to 'predict and control' and the overarching metaphor from 'army' to 'machine'.

It began during the Renaissance when Christian certainties began to be challenged by a small number of scientists and artists displaying the Orange level of human consciousness. The Age of Enlightenment and the Industrial Revolution brought a significant increase in the level of these challenges from among the educated classes. This stage has seen significant innovation producing increased levels of prosperity and life

expectancy, and reductions in famine and plague in the industrialized world.

Orange organisations have also brought ‘accountability’ and ‘meritocracy’ to the organisational model which continues to be hierarchical but in a more flexible way. Unfortunately, the Orange stage has also seen the rise of, “corporate greed, political short-termism, overleverage, overconsumption, and the reckless exploitation of the planet’s resources and ecosystems.”¹ In this stage we have seen the development of supranational bodies such as the UN, IMF and the EU, but also multinational corporations whose turnover is larger than the GDP of some nation states.

The four stages of the development of human consciousness prior to Achievement-Orange that are widely recognised, and their associated models of organisation and politics are:

- For the first 50,000 years of human history humans lived in small bands of family kinships of just a few dozen people (in some remote parts of the world there are societies still living in this way) and this stage is called the Reactive-Infrared stage. At this stage humans subsisted by foraging and there were no leaders, no model of organisations and the political model, insofar as there was one, was family kinship.
- The next stage is called the Magic-Magenta stage which evolved between 50,000 and 15,000 years ago and was when humans began to organise in small tribes in which elders had some authority over the tribe which was the political model.
- About 10,000 years ago humanity moved into the Impulsive-Red stage which saw the establishment of the first chiefdoms and proto-empires. The organisational and political model was made up of small armies formed as powerful chiefdoms which grew into proto-empires which were characterised by feudalism. There was no formal hierarchy and power was used to maintain status within the tribe much as an alpha wolf does in its pack.
- The fourth stage began in Mesopotamia about 4000 BC and is called the Conformist-Amber stage. This stage saw the move to states and civilisations, agriculture, institutions, bureaucracies and organised religion. Conformist-Amber organisations had the capability to do medium and long-term planning and produced stable and scalable organisational structures capable of feats such as building the Great Wall of China and running the ships, the trading posts, and the plantations of the Colonial world. The organisational model was of rigid hierarchical pyramids which made it possible to have larger organizations in which the thinking happened at the top, the doing at the bottom and for which the best metaphor would be the ‘army’. The political model was the nation state with a gradual but far from perfect development of democracy. Laloux comments that, “[W]ith so much in flux in the world today, some find Amber certainties an appealing refuge and call for a return to a fixed set of moral values.”²

The pluralistic-green stage of human consciousness

As I said earlier, Laloux has identified that there are two new stages of human consciousness developing; the first of these is the Pluralistic-Green stage. I think that Sue Goss's Garden Mind is a product of this developing stage of human consciousness. The first people to operate at this stage of human consciousness, in the 18th and 19th centuries, brought about "the abolition of slavery, women's liberation, separation of church and state, freedom of religion, and democracy."³ Laloux points to early experimenters with this paradigm in the form of the late 19th and early 20th century cooperative movement and the communes of the 1960s when it grew steadily. It is particularly found in postmodern academic thinking, in not for profit organisations, and among social workers and community activists, and in organisations practising 'servant leadership'.

However, the Pluralistic-Green organisational model can be found increasingly in the for-profit sector and in some successful companies of the last twenty to thirty years. Laloux identified three 'breakthrough practices' adopted by Green organisations: 'empowerment', 'values-driven culture and inspirational purpose' and a 'multiple stakeholder perspective'. Laloux argues that these practices are effective at breaking down old structures, but often less so at formulating practical alternatives, and that it is difficult to achieve consensus in large groups. From a political perspective we have seen green shoots of liberal democracy, but this has yet to flourish. As I said earlier, I think Sue Goss' 'garden mind' belongs to the Pluralistic-Green stage of human consciousness. Given the fact that the latter stage is not yet well developed and that much of humanity is still operating at earlier stages, I believe that moving from a machine mind to a garden mind would be a very major step forward towards more progressive politics. However, I think it would be useful for us to have in our sights the potential of the next stage of human consciousness – the Evolutionary-Teal stage.

The evolutionary-teal stage of human consciousness

The second of the new stages of human consciousness identified by Laloux is the Evolutionary-Teal stage and is regarded as post-postmodern. This stage has been called authentic, integral or Teal and "corresponds to Maslow's 'self-actualization' level...the last one identified by Maslow's hierarchy of needs..." The shift from Green to Teal is regarded as "a particularly momentous one in the human journey."⁴ In this stage "there is an evolution in consciousness...a momentum in evolution towards ever more complex and refined ways of dealing with the world."⁵ This stage

seems to take humanity in the direction of a deeper, more spiritual level of consciousness in which Laloux says, “[W]e are no longer fused with our ego, and don’t let its fears reflexively control our lives.” This stage presents a very humanistic face, replacing fear with being able to, “trust the abundance of life” , in which we, “learn to decrease our need to control people and events” and for which the purpose is, “to become the truest expression of ourselves.”⁶

In earlier stages of human consciousness external factors dictated decision making whereas in Teal, “internal yardsticks...of inner rightness”⁷ are used. In his research into the organisations which he believed to be at the Evolutionary-Teal stage, Laloux describes some very exciting and encouraging examples of how organisations can operate. In his research he identified the guiding metaphor of Teal Organisations as a, “living organism or living system”⁸ and discovered what he called ‘three breakthroughs’: self-management, wholeness and evolutionary purpose. In ‘Reinventing Organizations’, Laloux makes a strong case for these breakthroughs heralding a very different model for organisations but I believe that they also point to much needed changes in the way politics works.

In self-management, the first of his ‘three breakthroughs’, Laloux claims that Teal organisations have found a way of operating, “with a system based on peer relationships, without the need for hierarchy or consensus.”⁹ The examples he describes in his book are of organisations varying in size from 100 to 40,000 employees all of whom operate on the basis of autonomous teams of no more than 35 people, usually fewer, with small headquarters with none of the usual staff functions. Although these organisations are operating at the latest stage of human consciousness, underlying self-management is self-organisation which, “is the way life has operated in the world for billions of years, bringing forth creatures and ecosystems so magnificent and complex we can hardly comprehend them.”¹⁰

In the earlier stages of human consciousness, we have tried (and failed?) to control both self-organisation and one another. Teal organisations, “are ready now to move beyond rigid structures and let organizations come to life.”¹¹ Laloux sums up self-management in the following sentence: “[P]ower is multiplied when everybody gets to be powerful, rather than just a few at the top.”¹² To be clear, Laloux is not referring to the kind of power sharing that comes from ‘empowerment’. As he says in his book when countering one of the common misperceptions about self-managed teams, “[I]n Teal Organizations, people are not empowered by the good graces of other people...Individuals need not fight for power. They simply have it.”¹³ Two of the lessons that I learnt from more than 35 years working in a large organisation (chronicled in my book ‘Life In All Its Fullness: A Journey towards a Model for Organisations (or is it more than that?)’) and which I believe are equally applicable to today’s politics, are that:

- Society is broadly divided between those who seek power and those who readily concede it.

- In a crisis, hierarchies draw control into the centre whilst the effective identification and implementation of solutions is widely distributed.

The second breakthrough that Laloux identified in Teal organisations was wholeness. People have a tendency, encouraged by organisational cultures, to regard work as separate from the rest of life; we even talk of trying to achieve 'work/life balance'. It is considered inappropriate and potentially detrimental to people's employment to bring their whole and real selves to work. This attitude to work tends to emphasise rationality and masculine attributes such as determination and strength, to discourage expressions of doubt and vulnerability, and to ignore emotion, intuition and spirituality. However, as Laloux says the wisdom traditions tell us that, "[O]ur deepest calling in life...is to reclaim wholeness, within ourselves and in our connection with the outside world."¹⁴ I think what the need for wholeness says is that, in fact, it is our failure to bring our whole selves to work that is detrimental to the health and wellbeing of both the individual and the organisation. As Laloux says, "[P]ower is used with more wisdom, as people bring in more of themselves to work."¹⁵

In relation to the third breakthrough of Teal organisations, evolutionary purpose, Laloux says, "[T]eal organizations are seen as having a life and a sense of direction of their own."¹⁶ He goes on to say, "[S]omehow things just fall into place when people align their power and wisdom with the life force of the organization."¹⁷ This speaks to me of organisations not being fixed on a purpose or direction but learning from listening and experience, being self-organised. Instead of trying to predict and control the future in the manner of organisations still operating in earlier stages of human consciousness, Laloux says that members of Teal organisations, "are invited to listen in and understand what the organization wants to become, what purpose it wants to serve."¹⁸ In my book 'Life In All Its Fullness', I write at some length about Self-Organised Learning, a method of helping individuals, teams and organisations take responsibility for their own learning, in contrast to learning through most conventional teaching and training which is 'other organised'. Self-Organised Learners learn not only by doing but by learning to learn and by life relevance learning, ie by evolutionary purpose. The conversational learning process of Self-Organised Learning provides a natural vehicle for eliciting and developing purposes, and indeed strategies, which are evolutionary.

The current political system, 45° change the evolutionary-teal stage of human consciousness

How do the ongoing development of human consciousness, in particular, the emerging Evolutionary-Teal stage, and the outcomes of Frederic Laloux's research relate to the 45° change model advocated by Compass, and what do they mean for politics and the political system in the UK today? In the report [45° Change](#) published by Compass, Neal Lawson

provides a succinct critique of the prevailing Orange or machine stage of human consciousness, and the consequent organisations and political system, when he writes that, "... the old ways of doing and deciding things, in which we are either cogs in a corporate or state machine, or consumers in a free market free for all, are failing to meet our needs as human beings or solve our social, economic and environmental problems.

The Compass report describes the 45° change model as, "transforming society from below and above" and highlights that many civil society organisations are, "... finding new ways of 'deciding and doing'" and that, "A new society is starting to emerge from the bottom up." This new society speaks to me of civil society evolving into Teal organisations and holds out the hope of greater equality and democracy because the organisations involved, "... are built around flatter and more universal networks that allow everyone to know, speak, share and organise ..." However, I agree with the report when it makes clear that, "[A] good society cannot be won or sustained in spite of the system – only with it" and also when it goes on to say, "The UK political system, steeped in top down control and now opened to the excesses of the market, is ill prepared for the society and culture that is emerging."

Following Frederic Laloux's thesis, it seems to me that the current state of our politics is a product of the development of human consciousness, although not necessarily of just one stage in that development. In his book, 'Reinventing Organizations', Laloux issues a number of cautions against taking too simplistic a view of the stages of human development. Among these cautions, is that individuals and societies do not operate from just one paradigm. As he says, "... we human beings are wonderfully complex and cannot be reduced to a single stage," and, "[T]here are many dimensions of human development ... and we don't necessarily grow at the same pace in all of them."¹⁹ However, I do believe that the three breakthroughs of Teal organisations identified by Laloux – self-managed teams, wholeness and evolutionary purpose – clearly highlight ways in which politics in the UK needs to change, and here are some thoughts on the change needed in order to be prepared for the Teal society and culture that is emerging, and so that the 45° change can be brought about.

First of all, our political system is confrontational based on an ethos of 'them and us', and win-lose in a zero sum game which is typical of stages of human consciousness much earlier than Evolutionary-Teal. The design of the House of Commons facilitates an adversarial atmosphere with Parties literally 'taking sides' on either side of a space said to be equivalent to two swords' length. The second largest party in the House of Commons is called the 'official opposition' which seems to create an assumption to oppose rather than an assumption to engage constructively. Politicians talk of winning elections, winning votes and winning leadership contests, and, perhaps most tellingly, winning 'power' (in Mary Parker Follett's words this seems to be 'power over' rather than 'power with'). I am a great fan of sport to which winning and losing are fundamental, but society and politics are not sports and we should be seeking to build a better

society on the basis of win-win which is how Teal organisations operate. In contrast to competition obsessed Orange organisations, Frederic Laloux discovered in his research of Teal organisations that, "... competition is not mentioned anywhere ... the very notion of competition seems to have vanished."²⁰ In his recently published book 'The Tyranny of Merit', the philosopher Michael Sandel says, "To reinvigorate democratic politics, we need to find our way to a morally more robust public discourse, one that takes seriously the corrosive effect of meritocratic striving on the social bonds that constitute our common life."²¹

The purposes of politics, and policy and solution development in our current political system, particularly at the national level, are too inflexible. They tend to be dictated by dogma, five year manifestos designed to win elections and by being the opposite of what the other side proposes. UK politics does not have 'evolutionary purpose', and lacks effective mechanisms for listening to and understanding what the nation "wants to become, what purpose it wants to serve."²² Parliamentary select committees create opportunities for listening and understanding but they have limited powers and can be, and frequently are, ignored by Government. Teal politics will need to develop the capacity to listen and understand, and to implement the purposes which evolve so enabling the nation to become what it wants to be. It seems to me that our parliamentary procedures are not conducive to the identification and implementation of synergistic policies and solutions. There is, in particular, a lack of transparency and motivation to seek the common good.

In a Teal political system, policy and solution development would be an evolutionary, open, shared and deliberative process in which listening would be key, including through such things as citizens' assemblies. As Laloux found in Teal organisations, "[A]nybody that can help to achieve the purpose on a wider scale or more quickly is a friend, an ally, not a competitor."²³ This will require significant changes to the way in which parliamentary democracy operates, including, in my view, Government becoming the servant of Parliament which, in turn, must become more truly representative of the people. At a more community level, local authorities and community groups must have the appropriate power to bring about change at their level. Laloux writes the following about 'evolutionary democracy', "[T]eal governance will deepen democracy with more citizen involvement ... we might find ways to ground human decision-making in the basic evolutionary unfolding of the world ... we might look for ways to listen in to what the world is calling for."

I believe that the lessons of self-management identified by Laloux say that there is the need for a very different attitude in politics towards power, both by those who currently have it and those who do not. In his article in the Guardian of 29 July 2020 entitled [To rebuild the left, let's look beyond the Labour leadership](#), Neal Lawson talked of people finding, "... new collective ways to realise their humanity." This implies the development of non-hierarchical, grassroots, community organisations with the

power to bring about change. However, Laloux says that to enable a new organisation to start up with Teal principles or for an existing organisation to be transformed into one operating with such principles, it is necessary that the founder or top leader, "... must have an integrated worldview and psychological development consistent with the Teal developmental level" and the owners of the organisation, in the case of politics, we, as citizens, "... must also understand and embrace Evolutionary-Teal worldviews."²⁴

I can see that these necessary pre-conditions may well exist among 'networked active citizens', and that bringing about the changes necessary to create Teal politics from grassroots level would be consistent with enabling self-organisation. However, what about at national government level where, if anything, hierarchy is being strengthened and power centralised with increasing focus on the role and personality of the Prime Minister, the dilution of Cabinet government, and the increasing centralisation of power and the decreasing role of local government.? (On the latter, in their recently published book, 'Greed is Dead', economists Paul Collier and John Kay write, "[T]he centralized state has attempted to devolve responsibility for failure, rather than the means for achieving success."²⁵) Furthermore, there is increasing expectation, among the public and in the media, that the head of government should have all the answers and must take the blame for everything that goes wrong. In contrast, genuine subsidiarity would be at the heart of a Teal political system. As I have already said, in his research into Teal organisations Laloux found that, "[P]ower is multiplied when everybody gets to be powerful, rather than just a few at the top."²⁶

Wholeness in organisations means engaging people fully in their place of work and a Teal political model would seek to do the same in the wider social and political sphere. Disengagement from politics is widespread and detrimental to the common good. Achieving wholehearted engagement at the grassroots, community level is happening, but it is doing so in a wider, societal environment which, if anything, discourages it. Members of Parliament are actively discouraged from bringing their whole selves to their role because of the power of the political parties over candidate selection, patronage and the whipping system. In addition, the parliamentary hierarchy means that the Government, effectively put in place by Parliament, controls what, when and how the latter conducts its business. Teal organisations have head offices, but they are there to serve and support the self-managed teams and in a Teal Political system there would need to be a significant shift in the balance between Government and Parliament and its individual Members who would not be subject to the whip, or, at least, not to anything like the current extent. As quoted earlier, Laloux says in relation to Teal organisations, "[P]ower is used with more wisdom, as people bring in more of themselves to work."²⁷

I believe we are trying to maintain a two party system at a time when votes cast in General Elections indicate that we now have a multi-party electorate. However, our parliament is not only proportionally unrepresentative, it also does not reflect a representative cross section of

the population, partly at least, because of the central control of candidate selection by political parties. The two largest political parties stand in the way of a proportional electoral system and, in particular, in the way of multi-member constituencies which would create greater choice of candidates, whose selection should be a matter of local and not central control, as happens with recruitment in Teal organisations where, “... interviews aren’t handled by human resources personnel ... but by future teammates who simply want to decide if they would want to work with the candidate on a daily basis.”²⁸ Fundamental to an Evolutionary-Teal politics will be significantly more representative political institutions both proportionally and demographically.

What an evolutionary-teal society might look like

In a chapter towards the end of ‘Reinventing Organizations’, Frederic Laloux suggests some ways in which society might evolve. He cautions that, attractive as these evolutionary changes might be, there is no certainty that gradual transition to them may not be overtaken by some large scale disaster(s) brought about by such things as climate change, ecological catastrophe, nuclear war or, very topically at present, global epidemics. The ways in which Laloux suggests society might evolve are:

- Zero growth and, “... a closed-loop economy with zero waste, zero toxicity, and 100 percent recycling.”
- Alternative consumerism, partly driven by zero economic growth, with growth in, “... the ‘high touch’ services tending to our physical, emotional and spiritual well-being.”
- Rebirthing of existing industries such as, “... the way we grow food, educate children, care for the sick, and impart justice ...”
- Alternative monetary systems as current monetary systems based on the generation of interest will not be viable in a zero growth economy. Laloux challenges us to imagine, “... a society where we would feel safe not because of the assets we have stashed away, but because of trust in a solid tapestry of communal relations, knowing that we will look after each other when there is a need.”
- Stewardship which might transcend, “... both collective and individual ownership.”
- Global communities which might develop through existing and yet to be developed technology enabling us to, “... interact with people far away without the need for travelling; friendships and interest networks might become truly global.”
- The end of work as we know it which means that, “... we can contemplate a future where all people, not just a happy few, are free to follow their calling, to live a life of creative self-expression.”
- Spiritual re-enchantment through which Teal societies will, “... heal previous religious divisions and re-enchant the materialistic world of modernity through non-religious spirituality.”

Two comments and one suggestion

I would like to finish this paper with two comments on the 'Garden Mind' and one suggestion which I believe would be helpful in both the Pluralistic-Green and the Evolutionary-Teal stages of human consciousness.

In her Compass publication Sue Goss points to a number of things that are wrong with "[T]he underlying dynamics of our economy, our system of government, our institutions and our mindset," and I agree with her wholeheartedly. I also fully agree with her when she says, "[W]e ... want people to feel free to use their creative energies and be fully themselves ..."; indeed this is the main theme of my book 'Life In all Its Fullness'. At the heart of this is where power resides and what we mean by freedom. Goss argues that, "[W]e need politicians and civil servants, and public service managers ... to become gardeners" rather than controllers and drivers of the economy and society. So, my first comment on the 'Garden Mind' is that whilst I recognise that gardeners tend and nurture, they also decide what will be planted and where, and, indeed, in some cases, 'interfere' in the natural processes by which plants grow and flourish. I feel that the metaphor of the gardener still implies hierarchy, control of power and some limitation of the freedom of people, "to use their creative energies and be fully themselves." As Laloux says, in Evolutionary-Teal organisations, "[I]ndividuals need not fight for power. They simply have it,"²⁹ and that, "[P]ower is multiplied when everybody gets to be powerful, rather than just a few at the top."³⁰ So, I would say that we have to go 'beyond the garden mind' to the Teal stage of human consciousness before people are free to be fully themselves.

My second comment on the 'Garden Mind' relates to 'self-organisation' to which Sue Goss refers in her Compass paper 'Garden Mind' and which Frederic Laloux says, "is the way life has operated in the world for billions of years, bringing forth creatures and ecosystems so magnificent and complex we can hardly comprehend them."³¹ In 'Garden Mind', Goss uses a quote from Margaret Wheatley and Myron Kellner-Rogers' book 'a simpler way' in which they say, "Life self-organises. Networks, patterns and structures emerge without external imposition or direction."³² However, I think that the examples of self-organisation that Goss uses are of organisations organising themselves rather than of self-organisation as understood by Laloux, and Wheatley who writes, "[S]elf-organization is the capacity of life to invent itself."³³ To try to explain what self-organisation is I turn to the writings of Margaret Wheatley who agrees with Goss and Laloux that the metaphor for currently predominant Achievement-Orange organisations is the 'machine'. She writes:

"The accumulating failures at organizational change can be traced to a fundamental but mistaken assumption that organizations are machines."³⁴
"But as we describe organizations as living systems rather than as machines, self-organization becomes a primary concept, easily visible,"³⁵
as, "adaptive, flexible, self-renewing, learning, intelligent."³⁶

In 'Garden Mind' Sue Goss says that, "[T]he aim for the future could be... equilibrium," but Wheatley says that 'equilibrium' is the opposite of self-organisation which in the Second Law of Thermodynamics is defined as: "...the end state in the evolution of closed systems, the point at which the system has exhausted all of its capacity for change, done its work, and dissipated its productive capacity into useless entropy. (Entropy is an inverse measure of a system's capacity for change. The more entropy there is, the less the system is capable of changing.)"³⁷

However, life, society and organisations are 'open' not 'closed' systems and, in fact, thrive on 'disequilibrium' which the research of Ilya Prigogine, a Russian Nobel prize winning chemist, demonstrated is needed to enable a system to grow. He said that such systems: "...dissipate or give up their form in order to recreate themselves into new forms. ...these systems possess the innate ability to reorganize themselves to deal with the new information. For this reason, they are called self-organizing systems. They are adaptive and resilient rather than rigid and stable."³⁸

All open systems and all life share these self-organising dynamics, as Wheatley writes, "[S]elf-organization is the capacity of life to invent itself."³⁹ I have heard people argue that self-organisation is a recipe for anarchy but, in practice, when a self-organising system's environment shifts and the system realises that it needs to adapt, "... it always changes in such a way that it remains consistent with itself,"⁴⁰ and so that means in organisations, and society as a whole, "[T]his is not laissez-faire management disguised as new biology."⁴¹ Wheatley quotes the Austrian-born American astrophysicist, engineer, educator, author, consultant and futurist Erich Jantsch who wrote, "[T]he natural dynamics of simple dissipative structures teach the optimistic principle of which we tend to despair in the human world: the more freedom in self-organization, the more order."⁴²

In relation to organisations Wheatley writes, in words that I believe apply equally to society and politics, "[W]hen leaders strive for equilibrium and stability by imposing control, constricting people's freedom and inhibiting local change, they only create the conditions that threaten the organization's survival,"⁴³ and, "[T]oo often, organizations destroy our desires. They insist on their own imperatives. They forget we are self-organizing."⁴⁴ Again, I would say we have to go 'beyond the garden mind' to the Teal stage of human consciousness before organisations and society are truly self-organising.

I end this paper with a suggestion that relates to both of my comments on the 'Garden Mind' and which offers a tool for the gardener and, perhaps, a means to take us 'beyond the garden mind'. The suggestion is Self-Organised Learning (the core topic in of my book, 'Life In All Its Fullness') which is a learning methodology developed by Professors Laurie Thomas and Sheila Harri Augstein of the Centre for the Study of Human Learning (www.cshl.ac.uk) which was until the late 1990s a part of Brunel University.

I was attracted to Self-Organised Learning (SOL) because it can help people achieve their full potential and increase their contribution to whatever they are involved in. By learning I am not simply talking about the acquisition of knowledge and skills for, as George Kelly, founder of Personal Construct Psychology said, “[L]earning is not something that happens to a person on occasion; it is what makes him a person in the first place.”⁴⁵

Self-Organised Learning relates to my first comment on the ‘Garden Mind’ as it challenges the approach to learning of conventional teaching and training in which what is to be learnt, how it is to be learnt and whether it has been learnt are specified and decided by people other than the learner(s); usually somebody in a hierarchy. Sheila Harri Augstein and Laurie Thomas call this conventional approach to learning ‘other-organised’ and have said, “[A]t best, this results in learners who know how to ‘submit successfully to being taught, instructed or trained’.” In contrast, in Self-Organised Learning it is the learner(s) who decide(s) what is to be learnt, how it is to be learnt and whether it has been learnt; as Harri Augstein and Thomas have said, “[I]t empowers learners to make a shift from a dependent mode of learning, i.e. ‘other organised’, towards a self-organised mode of learning.” “By reflectively reviewing their direct personal experience Self-Organised Learners can better regulate the direction, quality and content of what they choose to learn.”

In relation to my second comment on the ‘Garden Mind’, the Centre for the Study of Human Learning was established, “... committed to the idea that each and every member of a democracy needs to learn how to become more self-organised. Only as we learn to become more fully responsible for who and what we are, at each stage of our own development, can we begin to participate more adequately in our shared responsibilities with and to others”. Harri Augstein has said that:

“Self-Organised Learning genuinely focuses on the learner and is the supreme expression of an individual’s freedom to learn. It is based on the fundamental notion that no one can ‘cause’ learning in someone else. It helps learners to take responsibility for their own learning and to more effectively learn how to learn.”

Self-Organised Learning is an iterative, learning methodology and a practical, conversation-based coaching model that enables individuals and groups to develop new skills and capabilities, in particular, that of learning to learn. It seeks to enable people to have the freedom to learn whilst providing a content free structure within which to do so and is based on decades of research and practice. As Laurie Thomas has said:

“Personally significant and valued learning through experience ... is achieved by exercising the freedom to learn in ‘conversational encounters’ which are valued by using criteria which arise from within the experience itself. Thus, we do not necessarily learn from life’s experiences, only through awareness, reflection and review of such encounters from within a conscious system of personal beliefs, values, needs and purposes.”

In 'Garden Mind' Sue Goss says, "We start with a spark, a clue, an idea and then mess around until something appears." Self-Organised Learning offers a structured, disciplined but content free approach to learning which helps to avoid 'messaging around'.

Endnotes

- 1 Frederic Laloux Reinventing Organizations: A Guide to Creating Organizations Inspired by the Next Stage of Human Consciousness 24
- 2 Ibid 20
- 3 Ibid 30
- 4 Ibid 43
- 5 Ibid
- 6 Ibid 44-45
- 7 Ibid 44
- 8 Ibid 56
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- 10 Ibid 134
- 11 Ibid
- 12 Ibid 290
- 13 Ibid 137
- 14 Ibid 144
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- 19 Ibid 38
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- 21 Michael Sandel The Tyranny of Merit 31
- 22 Frederic Laloux Reinventing Organizations: A Guide to Creating Organizations Inspired by the Next Stage of Human Consciousness 298
- 24 Ibid 237
- 25 Paul Collier and John Kay Greed is Dead 153
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- 27 Ibid
- 28 Ibid 174
- 29 Ibid 134
- 30 Ibid 290
- 31 Ibid 134
- 32 Margaret J Wheatley and Myron Kellner-Rogers a simpler way 3
- 33 Ibid 47
- 34 Ibid 32
- 35 Ibid 34
- 36 Ibid 32
- 37 Ibid 76
- 38 Margaret J Wheatley Leadership and the New Science; Discovering Order in a Chaotic World
- 39 Margaret J Wheatley and Myron Kellner-Rogers a simpler way 47
- 40 Margaret J Wheatley Leadership and the New Science; Discovering Order in a Chaotic World 85
- 41 Margaret J Wheatley Finding Our Way: Leadership for an Uncertain Time 43
- 42 Erich Jantsch in Leadership and the New Science; Discovering Order in a Chaotic World 87
- 43 Margaret J Wheatley Leadership and the New Science; Discovering

Order in a Chaotic World 89

44 Margaret J Wheatley and Myron Kellner-Rogers a simpler way

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45 George Kelly The Psychology of Personal Constructs 75

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