far greater than the aggregation of supposed majorities; they are what Jonathan Schell refers to as the unconquerable world. Darwin's encounters with the Fuegians were followed by journal entries of distaste and dismissal. Today, it is the indigenous people whose blogs and political action express distance from and disapproval of Western customs. Jesus was very clear about who will inherit the earth; so, too, are most indigenous people.

WE INTERRUPT THIS EMPIRE

The modern conservative ... is engaged in one of man's oldest exercises in moral philosophy. That is the search for a superior moral justification for selfishness.

—John Kenneth Galbraith¹

The Earth is not dying—it is being killed. And the people who are killing it have names and addresses.

—U. Utah Phillips²
November 30, 1999, was the longest day in Seattle's history, a day when hundreds of small citizen organizations came together to bell the cat of runaway undemocratic policies established by the World Trade Organization. More than seven hundred groups, and between forty thousand and sixty thousand individuals, took part in protests against WTO’s Third Ministerial in Seattle, constituting one of the most disruptive demonstrations in modern history and, at that time, the most prominent expression of a global citizens' movement resisting what protesters saw as a corporate-driven trade agreement. The demonstrators and activists who took part were not against trade per se. They wanted proof, rather, that trade—at least as WTO envisions it—benefits the poor, the workers, and the environment in developing nations, as well as at home. That proof had yet to be offered, because it could not be offered. Because it does not exist, protesters came to Seattle to hold WTO accountable. Their frustration arose because one side held most of the cards; that side comprised heads of corporations, trade associations, government ministries, most media, stockholders, and WTO.

From the point of view of those on the streets, WTO was trying to put the finishing touches on a financial autobahn that would transfer income to a small proportion of the population in wealthy nations under the guise of trade liberalization. The assumptions that undergird market fundamentalism are so pervasive that they have become conflated with fact. IMF, World Bank, and WTO are populated by many macroeconomists who believe that there is no such thing as involuntary unemployment, because in their economic models demand always equals supply. For true believers, markets are exquisitely calibrated mechanisms that always work perfectly; thus economic aberrations such as unemployment, poverty, or malnutrition must be caused by external factors. Because markets theoretically balance demand and supply, imbalances are caused by regulations or restrictions. According to this logic, it is unions and high wages that cause unemployment, while poverty is the result of high taxes imposed on people who aren't poor.
this upside-down world, idealism harms society and greed benefits the needy. Those who question the inevitability of supranational corporations to supply most of our material and employment needs are seen as out-of-step, if not nostalgic. But even the free market's most articulate defender, New York Times columnist Thomas Friedman, knows better: "The hidden hand of the market will never work without a hidden fist. McDonald's cannot flourish without McDonnell Douglas. And the hidden fist that keeps the world safe for Silicon Valley's technologies to flourish is called the U.S. Army, Air Force, Navy and Marine Corps."  

Of course, globalization does have potentially positive effects. They include dissolution of exclusionary political borders, increased transparency of political actors, connectivity among people around the world, and in general a wealth of new opportunities in employment, education, and income. But these benefits obscure the liabilities: resource and worker exploitation, climate change, pollution, destruction of communities, and diminished biological diversity. What is lost in the concept of a globalized market system is economic resiliency, the ability of regional economies to withstand bust and boom cycles. Also forsaken is economic security. When communities depend almost entirely on sources of production thousands of miles if not continents away, they become spectral towns lined with fast-food outlets and big-box retailers.

An inordinate focus on wealth creation also obscures poverty creation. No country advocates trade liberalization more ardently than the United States as a means to improve any country's social welfare, a policy known as the Washington Consensus. The irony of America's overheated emphasis on free-market ideology is how miserably it has failed its most ardent proponent. The United States has the worst social record of any developed country in the world, and it is worse than that of many developing countries. By almost any measure of well-being, the United States brings up the rear: It is number one in prison population (726 prison inmates per 100,000 people versus 91 in France and 58 in Japan); first in teen pregnancies, drug use, child hunger, poverty, illiteracy, obesity, diabetes, use of antidepressants, income disparity, violence, firearms, death, military spending, hazardous waste production, recorded rapes, and the poor quality of its schools. (The United States is the only country in the world besides Iraq where schools need metal detectors.) It has the highest trade budget deficit as a proportion of national income and has seen more than 30 million workers laid off by corporations since 1984, most of whom were permanently consigned to lower-wage jobs. As a uniform trading system sweeps over the world, the monetary gains are called GDP, but the losses that are suffered, even in the industrialized West, much less in the Third World, are not tallied, as if one were recording sales at the cash register but ignoring thefts at the back of the warehouse.

The theory behind market liberalization is beguiling and, on the face of it, inarguable: If poor countries had more money and freedom, everyone would be better off; the greater flow of material goods would eventually improve everyone's life. To those who care about low wages and poor working conditions in developing countries, free-market advocates argue that freedom and prosperity require time and sacrifice. But whose time and whose sacrifice? Critics see the further concentration of wealth and power, not the spread of freedom. The world's top two hundred companies have twice the assets of 80 percent of the world's people, and that asset base is growing fifty times faster than the income of the world's majority. Wealth flows uphill from the poor to the rich.

Do sixteen-year-old girls want to live in prisonlike concrete dormitories enclosed by gates, razor wire, and guards, a thousand miles from their villages, doing piecework that nets them $50 a month? Yes, in China they absolutely do. They can send nearly half of that sum back to their parents to help pay for medicine, books, and clothing for their younger siblings. Compare this description of workers toiling "day after day, for three hundred and thirteen days of the year, fourteen hours in each day, in an average heat of eighty-two degrees" with this account of "over four hundred men and women held by slavers in debt bondage, forced to work 10–12 hour days, 6 days per week... under the constant watch of armed guards. Those who attempted escape were assaulted, pistol-whipped, and even shot." The first passage describes Lancashire textile workers in 1824; the second, Mexican and Guatemalan agricultural workers in South Carolina and Florida in 1997. Many believe that the world can do better after three hundred years than to retrace the Hobbesian dehumanization of the first Industrial Age.

Globalization has commoditized work into a series of fungible bits and pieces. Every aspect of production has been put up for bid; every developing country is an eager bidder. The rural poor provide a supply of labor for factories that make anything anytime for anyone anywhere, just as they did at the beginning of the Industrial Revolution. The anomie in these new factory towns, which typically lie near transportation corridors, is palpable. Prostitution, loss of identity, and feelings of powerlessness engulf you. The
migration to factory towns today echoes the plight of commoners who in the early 1700s lost their homes after the Enclosure Movement and ended up working fourteen-hour days in Manchester textile mills. Inside modern contract-manufacturing facilities, there is no brand loyalty, pride, learning, or culture because the finished products have no intrinsic meaning to workers or management. They are abstractions: Guadalupe Virgins sold in Tijuana, athletic shoes for Kmart, a Ralph Lauren polo shirt, a pink baby bonnet for Kids "R" Us. The lives, culture, and skills of the workers are of no value because the work has been deskilled to the point of mindlessness. Only speed, hand-eye coordination, and stamina are required.

From a consumer perspective, market globalization appears to have taken on a life of its own, as if lightning had ignited a wildfire in the sagebrush of the commercial world. One day your Levi's are made in San Antonio, the next in a country you can't easily locate on a map. In reality, however, the world trade system is heavily planned, controlled, and regimented. When you dissect the issue of globalization with respect to trade, it is less about integration, and primarily about the rights of business. WTO eliminates normal checks and balances because it performs all three roles of governance: executive, legislative, and judicial. The executive branch operates through the G-6 nations' ministerial meetings; the judicial functions through the Dispute Settlement Panel, which meets in secret and does not have to notify national legislative bodies of pending challenges to their laws; the legislative branch is the General Council, which sets policies, though in practice most decisions are made in private green room meetings in which the richer nations conduct the most important negotiations.

The purpose of the organization could not be simpler: the elimination of constraints on the flow of trade, including how a product is made, by whom it is made, or what happens after it is made. By doing so, WTO removes individual countries' and regions' ability to set standards, to express values, or to determine what they do or do not support if those standards conflict with WTO rules. From WTO's perspective, a fish is a fish is a fish, and it doesn't matter what happened to sea turtles, dolphins, or workers when that fish was caught. The underlying principle is to prevent protectionism and unfair discrimination against member countries, thus providing a form of civil rights for goods. What this means in practice is that child labor, prison labor, forced labor, substandard wages, and poor working conditions cannot be used as a basis to discriminate against imports. Environmental destruction, toxic waste production, and the presence of transgenic materials or synthetic hormones have likewise been rejected as a basis to screen or stop goods from entering a country.

In 1994, when the WTO's Uruguay Round of Multilateral Trade Negotiations was sent to Congress for ratification, Ralph Nader offered $10,000 to the charity designated by any senator or representative who signed an affidavit stating that he or she had read the 550-page document and could answer several questions about it. There had been no public hearings, dialogues, or education regarding this massive adventure in free trade, an agreement that gave WTO the ability to overrule or undermine international conventions, acts, treaties, and agreements. Many delegates to the negotiations, even heads of country delegations, were not aware of some provisions that had been drafted by subgroups of bureaucrats and lawyers, many of whom represented multinational corporations. In the United States, only Senator Hank布朗, a Colorado Republican, took Nader up on his offer. After reading the document, Brown changed his mind and voted against ratification.

What WTO seeks to protect is business and growth, not people and the environment, with an underlying assumption that the wealthier a country becomes, the better it is able to protect its people and its environment. It has not turned out that way. The people who were most articulate and vociferous in Seattle were not protesting against globalization per se but against what it actually (and, they believe, inevitably) entails, which is the corporatization of the commons. The commons that are being subsumed include the human genome, seeds, water, food, airwaves, media, and more. In a deeper sense, the commons include culture, place, self-determination, and democracy. The Seattle protests were about people's need for a standing and for a voice in their communities and factories. They do not constitute an anti-globalization movement but seek rather to bring about "globalization from below." Publicly held corporations promulgate an unspoken falsehood: that capital has a right to grow, a right greater than the rights of people, communities, and cultures. But corporations are extensions of us: shareholders, pension funds, endowments, and fiduciaries demand maximum returns. The community of protesters in Seattle argued that the world cannot achieve sustainability and equity if trade and corporate policies destroy local economies. The change in world economies has given us the means to disagree, but it is a lopsided discussion because of the realities of the balance of power. Most of the world's economies and governments are under the control of corporations, which seem to be successfully tightening their grasp; at the same time the world itself is increasingly out of control.
The corporatization of the world means the loss of economic and cultural diversity. Historian Arnold Toynbee cautioned that civilization is a movement, not a condition, and the rise of uniformity consistently marks its decline.

Most accounts of the Seattle demonstrations refer to them as “riots,” even though they were 99.9 percent nonviolent. A person commits to a nonviolent path of resistance when avenues of dialogue have been closed. This is satyagraha. It is a deliberate choice and usually the last option, and anyone who has marched toward armored police, snarling dogs, or military units knows how gut-churning it is to face such physical threats with palms turned outward. Being beaten by another human being without resisting clashes with survival instincts and lights up the adrenal glands. To protect oneself but not respond, to see the person beating you as a friend, and not as an enemy, is extraordinarily challenging. This response is not passive, nor is it weak. It was Gandhi who said he prized nonviolence only when he began to shed his cowardice. Seattle was not a riot. A riot occurs when people fight back.

During the afternoon and into the night, downtown Seattle became surreal. Ad hoc marchers imitated fifes and drums corps of the American Revolution using empty five-gallon buckets for instruments. A few demonstrators danced on burning Dumpsters that had been ignited by pyrotechnic tear-gas grenades (the same ones used in Waco, Texas, against the Branch Davidians). Despite their steadily dwindling numbers, as many as 1,500 hardy protesters held their ground, seated passively in front of police, hands raised in peace signs, submitting to tear gas, pepper spray, and riot batons. As they retreated to the medics, new forces replaced them. The mandate for WTO vanished sometime that afternoon, because by then all media attention had been diverted to what was happening in the streets. By nine that night, the police order to clear the downtown area had been accomplished, but some police, perhaps fresh recruits from outlying towns, didn’t want to stop there. They chased demonstrators into neighborhoods where the distinctions between protesters and citizens blurred (the majority of protesters were from Seattle) and began attacking bystanders, witnesses, residents, and commuters. They gassed commuters on passing Metro buses. They dragged a member of the Seattle City Council out of his car and tried to arrest him. When President Clinton sped from Boeing Field to the Westin Hotel at 1:30 a.m. Wednesday, his limousines entered a police-ringed city of littered streets, patrolling helicopters, and boarded windows. Michael Meacher, environment minister of the United Kingdom, said afterward, “What we hadn’t reckoned with was the Seattle Police Department, who single-handedly managed to turn a peaceful protest into a riot.”

The day before the ministerial, Madeline Bunting had filed a report in the Guardian Weekly: “Expect out of Seattle’s World Trade Organization meeting this week lurid reports of multicolored-haired, body-pierced, tattooed anarchists. In glib detail, we will hear of the wilder shores of environmentalism and anarchism among the 150,000 protesters Seattle police and the FBI are bracing themselves for. . . . This is a colorful way of reporting a tediously difficult trade summit, but it is a gross distortion of a crucially important event. The protesters in Seattle cannot be dismissed as nutters; you could hardly describe the World Wildlife Fund, Oxfam or the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds or many of the other 1,200 environmentalist, development and human rights groups who signed a petition to the WTO in advance of this meeting as extremists. What is depressing is that this distortion serves only one interest. The wise chief executive of a global multinational will put up with a bit of tear gas floating over his lobster lunch this week. It gives him the perfect opportunity to dismiss his critics as fanatics . . . .”

Bunting’s prediction proved accurate; the unexpected action reverberated across the world and was portrayed as a threat to the nation-state itself. A surprised press corps went to work, expressing outrage and pointing fingers at bash, misguided white kids. Thomas Friedman, in his December 1 column, wrote that demonstrators were “a Noah’s ark of flat-earth advocates, protectionist trade unions and yuppies looking for their 1960s fix.” In fact, the protesters were hardly anarchic, but organized, well-educated, and determined. The vast majority were human rights activists, labor activists, nuns, indigenous people, people of faith, steelworkers, and farmers. They were forest activists, environmentalists, social justice workers, students, and teachers. They were citizens.

The business community believes that other cultures, once they have tasted the fruits of self-interest and economic freedom pioneered in America, will want to be like us. There are good reasons to think so. Baywatch is the most-watched TV program in the world, Nike the largest shoe company in the world,
Coca-Cola the biggest beverage company in the world, and McDonald's the biggest fast-food chain in the world. Given such commercial dominance, it is a short step to believing that the global market system is the perfect instrument to bring to less-developed countries "democratic capitalism." With an ear to the voice of the poor, however, no American corporate leader has ever expressed doubts that the future of every country in the world lies in adopting some version of Western values, or entertained the idea that cultural diversity may be more important than corporate profits. They and other ideological supporters of market fundamentalism do acknowledge that the rough and tumble of unrelenting markets can diminish the role of democracy in human affairs (the no-omelette-without-breaking-eggs analogy), but they insist that because people vote every day with their pocketbooks, the total impact of global markets is a true plebiscite in the end. New York Times columnist Thomas Friedman employs the term "economic democracy" for this principle, but the underlying idea is the same: markets are not merely a medium of exchange but a "medium of consent" that helps the poor, improves income, and protects citizens' interests.

Thomas Frank, author of What's the Matter with Kansas?, calls all such nostrums by yet another name: "Market populism is an idea riven by contradictions. It is the centerpiece of the new American consensus, but that consensus describes itself in terms of conflict, insurrection, and even class war. It is screechingly undemocratic, and the formal institutions of democracy have never seemed more distant and irrelevant than under its aegis. It speaks passionately of economic fairness, and yet in the nineties the American economy elevated the rich and forgot the poor with decisiveness we hadn't seen since the 1920s. Market populism decrees 'elitism' while transforming CEOs as a class into one of the wealthiest elites of all time. It deplores hierarchy while making the corporation the most powerful institution on earth. It hails the empowerment of the individual and yet regards those who use that power to challenge markets as robotic stooges. It salutes choice and yet tells us this triumph of markets is inevitable."9

Many critics in other countries agree. For them, "democratic capitalism," "economic democracy," and "market populism" are all the same oxymoron. Dismissed by the market fundamentalists for wanting to turn back the clock, they make an excellent case for reversing that argument. By rapidly reducing tariffs and barriers to capital flows, governments and WTO are effectively re-creating the pitiful labor conditions of the nineteenth century: deracination, urban blight, child and migrant labor, exploitation, mindless jobs, and on-the-job abuse, topped with laissez-faire indifference. Many petitioners to WTO ask whether the breakneck speed of corporate-led globalization might pause to solicit a second opinion from humanity. Must the economic mutations of rapid change replicate the same levels of "creative destruction" as seen in the past? To "globalize" literally means to make something round. Globalization began just over five hundred years ago when Western Europeans began to accept the idea that the earth is round, something Indian and Chinese civilizations already knew. Ever since then, in myriad ways, commerce, armies, travelers, and scholars have worked toward integrating human activity with geography, encircling the globe with development that arose from Western appetite.

The divisions in the world today have no better analog than the Green and Red Zones of Baghdad.10 Armored fencing, earthen berms, sensors, Humvees, and machine guns defend the Green Zone, four square miles of a leafy green, irrigated desert surrounded by a twelve-foot concrete blast wall.11 Within are villas, the Al-Rashid Hotel, bowling alleys, karaoke bars, fast-food restaurants, and the former presidential complex of Saddam Hussein. There, employees of the Coalition of the Willing do their work alongside American military commanders, Iraqi ministers, and American corporations such as Bechtel and Halliburton. They feed at cafeterias that offer pork morning, noon, and night—sausages, bacon, pork chops, hot dogs—a constant affront to the Muslim staff and Iraqi secretaries and translators.12 Women jog down boulevards in tank tops and shorts while Iraqi children sell pornographic DVDs to soldiers at the bazaar. Bars are packed, administrative assistants are known to double up as hookers on their second shift, and armed military contractors lounge on cushions at the Green Zone Café sucking on hookahs.13 Annual room, board, and office expenses run $300,000 per person, not counting six-figure salaries, travel, and the costs of military protection.14

Outside its perimeters is a traumatized city of 5.6 million residents, with open-air markets, mosques, neighborhoods, schools, tea stalls, and a rolling civil war fought with car bombs, beheadings, and executions. The Red Zone is noisy and crowded, pervaded by fear and anger. The two zones mirror the global split between those who rule and the majority, who don't. Throughout the world, at meetings such as that of the World Bank, corporate executives, political leaders, and heads of international agencies gather in secure
resorts to map solutions to the world’s problems, ringed by police, razor wire, attack dogs, and checkpoints. Outside is the majority world, and like Baghdad, its population feels stripped of power, security, and hope.

Tens of thousands of NGOs work toward amending the market policies of globalization because markets are not designed to be surrogates for ethics, values, and justice. So great a number of organizations have been founded because their function is the opposite of uniform trade rules: they try to deliver specific solutions tailored to the individuals and places they address. Several NGOs filed a lawsuit that brought tens of millions of dollars in back wages and repatriation costs to thousands of indentured workers in Saipan. These organizations were dismissed by free-market guru Jagdish Bhagwati as a “radical . . . fringe phenomenon,” and in one retrospect, Bhagwati is correct: the organizations that argue, demonstrate, and litigate for human rights are on the fringe. Why must such groups operate at the margins of society simply if they believe that social justice and human rights should not be sacrificed when corporations shift their manufacturing to the lowest-wage countries? History may wonder why so few cared so little about so many for so long. Critics of NGOs sincerely believe that the brutality, slavery, and colonial exploitation of the previous five centuries have effectively been vanquished, and the modern corporate march to global markets represents a new page in economic history. In fact, that expansion is fundamentally a predictable stage in the march of market economics; what is new is the global coordination of resistance to it.

Patricia King, one of two Newsweek reporters in Seattle, called me after the ministerial to ask if I thought the protests represented a return of the 1960s. I replied that I didn’t believe so, and I still don’t. The sixties were primarily a Western event, whereas the protests against WTO are international. Who were the leaders? I said that there are no leaders in the traditional sense, as there were in the civil rights, women’s, or antiwar movements. But there are thought leaders. Who are they? she asked. Martin Khor and Vandana Shiva of the Third World Network in Asia, Maude Barlow of the Council of Canadians, Tony Clarke of Polaris Institute, Jerry Mander of the International Forum on Globalization, Susan George of the Transnational Institute, John Cavanagh of the Institute for Policy Studies, Lori Wallach of Public Citizen, Arunadha Mittal, Owens Wiwa of the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People, Chakravarthi Raghavan of the Third World Network in Geneva, Debra Harry of the Indigenous Peoples Coalition Against Biopiracy, José Bové of the Confederation Paysanne, Tetteh

Hormoku of the Third World Network in Africa, Randy Hayes of Rainforest Action Network. “Stop, stop,” she said. “I can’t use these names in my article.” I asked why not. “Because Americans have never heard of them.” Instead of trying to explain the intellectual underpinnings of the Seattle protests, King’s Newsweek editors, in an editorial decision that would have made William Randolph Hearst proud, prominently placed the picture of the Unabomber, Theodore Kaczynski, in their cover story on Seattle because he had once purchased a pamphlet by anarchist writer John Zerzan. A handful of Zerzan’s followers did show up at Seattle to break windows, but his tangential essay could scarcely begin to account for what motivated the tens of thousands of other people who also took part in the protest.

In the end, it was not on the streets that the Seattle ministerial broke down, but within its conference rooms. Once the meeting finally got underway, it ended in a rancorous stalemate, with African, Caribbean, and some Asian countries refusing to support a draft agenda that had been negotiated behind closed doors without their participation. The outsiders see a difference between globalization and internationalization. (Former World Bank economist Herman Daly has long made the same distinction.) In internationalization, each nation sets its own trade standards and will do business with other nations that are willing to meet those standards. Do nations abuse this system? Always and constantly, and the United States is among the worst offenders in that regard. But where democracies prevail, internationalization does provide a means for people to set their own policy, influence decisions, and determine their own future. Globalization, in contrast, envisions standardized legislation for the entire world, with capital and goods moving at will superior to the rule of national laws. Globalization supersedes nation, state, region, and village. While diminishing the power of nationalism is a good idea, elimination of sovereignty may not be if it is replaced by a corporate boardroom.

An example of WTO’s power is Chiquita Brands International, a $4 billion corporation that donated $500,000 to the Democratic Party in 1996. Two days before the contribution was made, the Clinton administration filed a complaint with WTO against the European Union, alleging European import and tariff policies favored bananas coming from small family-owned growers in the Caribbean who made a living wage, instead of from U.S.-owned multinational banana conglomerates that have a long history of worker strife, low wages, and toxic poisoning due to use of agrochemicals. The Europeans freely and proudly acknowledged the charge to be true,
having set aside a portion of their market—7 percent—for Caribbean imports from Dominica, St. Lucia, and St. Vincent. For Europeans, the banana tariff was the decent thing to do; besides, everyone thought the bananas from the smaller growers tasted better. For the banana giants, this attitude was untenable, even though Chiquita already had 50 percent of E.U. market share.

The WTO banana hearings would have made Lewis Carroll proud. Trade representatives from St. Lucia and St. Vincent were not allowed to make presentations because they were not properly schooled in the arcane of WTO case law. They were asked to hire lawyers knowledgeable in the field of trade, but WTO then barred their attorneys from the hearing because it was a government-only body, which left both islands without representation at the banana hearings. The Europeans ultimately made several concessions in 1998 but insisted that a two-tier quota regime remain in place. Demonstrating the customary political flexibility of U.S. corporations, Chiquita Brands donated $350,000 to the Republican Party. Two months later the Republican-controlled Congress introduced a retaliatory law against the E.U., which required the Clinton administration to impose sanctions on European products, including goat cheese, cashmere, and biscuits. In 1999 the E.U. was forced to rescind its preferential quotas for the small Caribbean growers. While the United States prevailed in this WTO arbitrated case, who really won and who lost? Did the Central American employees at Chiquita Brands win? Ask the hundreds of workers in Honduras who were made infertile by use of dibromochloropropane on the banana plantations. Ask the mothers whose children have birth defects from pesticide poisoning. Did the shareholders of Chiquita win? By the end of 1999 Chiquita Brands was losing money. Its stock was at a thirteen-year low, shareholders were angry, and the company was up for sale, but the prices of bananas in Europe remained low. Who lost? Caribbean farmers who could formerly make a living and send their kids to school could no longer do so because of low prices and demand. Because bananas comprised nearly 50 percent of the islands’ GDP, some displaced farmers have become growers for the drug cartels, and their governments have quietly pulled out of cooperative narcotics enforcement programs. This is America’s loss. The Caribbean is one of the few places where the United States has a trade surplus. With lower export earnings, companies suffer—American companies.

No one much cares about WTO trade rules until they are directly affected by them, by which point it is often too late. In 1996 a WTO tribunal ruled that U.S. clean air standards regarding gasoline emissions violated Venezuela’s right to export gasoline that did not meet those criteria, a ruling that came after American companies had invested $37 billion to bring their products into compliance. Lewis Carroll again: WTO member nations have a sovereign right to establish environmental standards and objectives, but they may implement environmental regulations only in a manner consistent with WTO rules. In other words, they are entitled to create meaningless rules. As it now stands, a member country cannot prevent substances, whether materials or food, from being imported unless they have WTO-approved proof of harmful consequences. Industry-led coalitions from the United States are contesting the fact that Europe allows food to be labeled to indicate whether its ingredients have been genetically modified. So far the United States has prevailed in eliminating European restrictions on hormone-treated beef, even though the vast majority of European citizens want to limit its sale. Monsanto hoped that Seattle would be its moment for eliminating E.U. restrictions on genetically modified corn and soy. When the E.U. tried to eliminate PVC teeth rings containing phthalates, which cause liver and kidney damage, the U.S. toy industry tried to stop it because the science had not yet provided definitive proof. WTO secretary general Renato Regazzoni declared that regulations and standards that are environmentally based are “doomed to fail and could only damage the global trading system.”

In all WTO rulings one common denominator prevails, and that denominator is money. As it happens, however, it is not the corporations that hold the biggest bag of cash, but the World Bank, which dominates the flow of money into the developing world. Like all institutions, the bank has a point of view, a modus operandi, and a culture to support it. What primarily guides it is the theory that unimpeded market-based systems deliver more goods to more poor people faster than any other method. Given the catastrophic failure of state-sponsored socialism in the former Soviet Union, it is a difficult point to argue. But stressing that theory is the observation that corrupt governments do not efficiently provide equitable services to their people. Because the World Bank cannot directly meddle with the internal politics of a given country, it can only insist on privatization and monetary reforms to curtail irresponsibility. It can remove assets from the hands of the state and place them into the marketplace, where consumers vote every day with their wallets.

The theory behind the World Bank’s operations is laudable. But there is
scent evidence to support its claims in the real world. The situation is comparable to the difference between official history and the people’s history. Columbus is generally credited with having discovered America. The inhabitants of the lands he “discovered” also made a discovery: that a race of barbaric men with developed navigational skills had no qualms about raping their women, eviscerating their elders, hunting down anyone who resisted, and packing them off naked like so many animals off to Europe to be sold as slaves—a fate so horrific that masses of Arawak people committed infanticide and then suicide rather than face an uncertain future. The point here is to give dimension to how particular individuals actually experience the published narrative of history. What poor people experience when market reforms and other flats sweep through their barrios or squatter settlements is, similarly, at a far remove from what World Bank bureaucrats imagine in their pristine offices in Washington, D.C. Asking the impoverished to make a structural adjustment is like asking a toddler to cross a freeway. People at the bottom of the economic pyramid don’t have the latitude to be able to pay more for water, give up free health care, lose jobs, compete with subsidized Iowa corn farmers, or begin funding schooling.

In the 1960s, the World Bank financed the fish-processing industry on Lake Victoria in Tanzania. Nile perch were introduced, a ravenous predator that eliminated 350 varieties of the lake’s native fish. Today, flash-frozen perch fillets are exported to Europe via massive Ilyushin cargo planes. These aging jumbo jets return, sometimes carrying dried peas and flour to feed refugees, and other times Kalashnikovs and munitions that support Central Africa’s numerous refugee-creating wars. The native population does not benefit from this $400 million industry. Having lost most of their traditional fisheries, they rely for food on the fish heads and scraps thrown away by the fish processors. Because the oily fish heads require wood-fire for drying, shorelines are becoming rapidly deforested, causing erosion, run-off, and eutrophication, all of which threaten the Nile perch. Children are protein-deficient, HIV-infected prostitutes ring the fishing camps, and midges that were once controlled by the now-absent native fish swarm near the shore. The 2004 documentary Darwin’s Nightmare depicts the carnage of Lake Tanzania in terrifying detail. It should be mandatory viewing for every World Bank manager, every market fundamentalist, every op-ed globalizer.

In 1990 fewer than 50 million people in the world bought their water from private companies. Ten years later, that number has risen to 460 million. Why? Countries borrowing from the World Bank must have a water privatization plan as a precondition for all loans. European companies, dominated by Suez and Veolia, control 70 percent of the private water market. Water and sanitation are estimated to be a $200–$400 billion business, which for corporations is an opportunity comparable to discovering oil. The recipient of World Bank financing for water privatization in Ghana was Enron. After several years of coercive threats, the World Bank forced Bolivia, South America’s poorest country, to sign a forty-year privatization lease in September 1999 with Aguas del Tunari, a company owned partly by Bechtel Corporation, to privatize Cochabamba’s water, a deal that guaranteed the company a 16 percent return on investment over the life of the contract.

What this meant was that people in the eighth-poorest country in the world were paying more for their water than Bechtel executives living in the wealthy suburbs of San Francisco. When water rates doubled and tripled for the Bolivian poor to an overall average of one-fourth of their monthly income, demonstrations began and continued until the contract was repealed. Eduardo Galeano has described the electoral victory banning water privatization in Uruguay, writing that Uruguayans, who are so melancholic that they could be described as “Argentines on Valium, are dancing on air . . . .

A few days before the election of the President of the planet in North America, in South America elections and a plebiscite were held in a little-known, almost secret country called Uruguay. . . . [F]or the first time in world history, the privatization of water was rejected by popular vote . . . . [and] the people asserted that water, a scarce and finite natural resource, must be a right of all people and not a privilege for those who can pay for it.”

You can try to determine the future, or you can try to create conditions for a healthy future. To do the former, you must presume to know what the future should be. To do the latter, you learn to have faith in social outcomes in which citizens feel secure, valued, and honored. It is difficult to estimate precisely how many NGOs in the world are trying to rectify and heal the effects, some would say fiascos, of World Bank’s development policies, but they number in the thousands. In borrower countries—including Bolivia, Argentina, Haiti, India, Brazil, Mexico, Ecuador, and South Africa—the indigenous and the poor have initiated countless protests against the corruption, political cronyism, privatization schemes, job losses, environmental destruction, human rights violations, decapitation, mega-dams, and loss of sovereignty brought about by the World Bank. The bank’s response has been to increase spending on public relations, which now exceeds its research budget.
One of the legacies of the World Bank is the misery of unpayable debt, in the form of money owed for tractors, dams, and power plants that were supplied by big corporations from the developed world. That debt, which can be crushing for developing countries, especially when development schemes have failed to deliver the promised jobs and growth, can drag a country backward into an austerity that truncates formerly affordable education and health care. Many new World Bank loans are not for development but for debt service on deficits created by previous loans. World Bank money comes from wealthy countries, and throughout the institution's history, the flow of money from the southern hemisphere's less developed countries to the northern hemisphere's more developed ones has been greater than the reverse. World Bank headquarters in Washington, D.C., are lavish to the point of embarrassment. U.N. headquarters in New York are in disrepair, part of the building collapsed in 2003.

Just as democracies require an informed and active citizenry to prevent abuse, markets require constant tending to prevent them from being diverted or exploited. A free market, so lovely in theory, is no more feasible in practice than a society without laws. Democrats can sustain freedom because their citizens and representatives continually adjust, maintain, and enforce standards, rules, and laws. Markets are unequalled in providing feedback, fostering innovation, and allocating resources. Market competition is ultimately a matter of financial capital; those activities that most efficiently accrete and concentrate money gain market advantage; those that don't are marginalized. But there is no comparable competition to improve social or natural capital, because markets for such commodities simply don't exist. The only way those issues are dealt with is through legislation, regulation, citizen activity, and consumer pressure. Removing the laws and regulations that create market constraints leaves the body politic with very few means to promote economic democracy. The localized poor, primary forests, the stratosphere, and ecosystem viability, which are the source of life for every economy in the world, have no voice at all in market systems. That voice comes from citizen organizations, although when it does, it is often ignored or patronized.

To raise the decibel level where they can be heard, outcries and protests from civil society may at times appear to be narrowly focused and shrilly expressed. Any resistance to economic liberalization strikes some critics as pathetic, even absurd. Ironically, what citizen organizations, NGOs, and trade unions are calling for is exactly the same thing as the glossy PowerPoint presentations that emanate from World Bank and IMF: economic integration. From the citizens' viewpoint, integration of policy needs to be bottom up, not just top down. It needs to combine public and private needs, the poor and the middle class, owners and the landless. Today, a growing number of economists believe that the exclusion of civil society as a valid, necessary factor in economic planning has undermined growth and equitable development throughout the world. These economists are now calling for the same policy changes that NGOs have been promoting. Nancy Birdsall of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace and Augusto de la Torre of the World Bank have written a paper entitled "Washington Contentious: Economic Policies for Social Equity in Latin America," which puts forth eleven critical development prerequisites, including promoting services and schools for the poor, protecting workers' rights, enacting land reform, giving small businesses more stable footing to compete, and removing regressive consumption levies and taxing the rich. All of these would have found a place on the placards of the demonstrators in Seattle.

Arguments for and against globalization of trade fall into the symmetric patterns seen in debates between progressives and conservatives on just about any issue. "You cannot switch off these forces except at great cost to our own economic well-being," writes Fareed Zakaria in the New York Times. "Over the last century, those countries that tried to preserve their systems, jobs, culture or traditions by keeping the rest of the world out stagnated. Those that opened themselves up to the world prospered." That argument sounds good, but it is not true. Japan, the second-largest economy in the world, continues to maintain rigid barriers and tariffs for many goods and products, as do Korea and China. Zakaria is referring to countries such as Burma, North Korea, and the former Soviet Union, which were effectively strangled by totalitarian economic controls. He overlooks, however, a country like Bhutan, which has done a remarkable job in preserving its culture, restraining corruption, promoting the economy, and preserving the environment, using an approach it calls the Gross National Happiness.

Generalities, whether from the right or left, aren't helpful when discussing free trade, because a plethora of factors determines the first- and second-order effects of liberalized markets. In his book The Clock of the Long Now: Time and Responsibility, Stewart Brand discusses what makes a civilization resilient and adaptive. Scientists have applied that very question to ecosystems, and it is worthwhile to ask if it of economic and market systems as well. How does a system, be it cultural or natural, manage change, absorb
shocks, and survive, especially when the forces of change are rapid and accelerating? The answer has much to do with time, both our use of it and our respect for it. Biological diversity in ecosystems helps buffer against disasters due to sudden environmental shifts because different organisms operate on different time scales—flowers, fungi, spiders, trees, and foxes all have unique life cycles and rates of change. Some respond quickly to their environment, others slowly, so that the system, when subjected to stress, can move, sway, and give, and then return and be restored to balance.

WTO policies engage and affect four chronologies or time frames, but WTO considers only one of them. The dominant time frame of our age is commerce. Businesses are responsive, welcome innovation in general, and have a bias for change. They need to grow more quickly than ever before, due to the integration of capital markets and globalization; they are punished, even bankrupted, if they do not. With the efficiency of worldwide capital mobility, companies and investments are rewarded or penalized instantly by a network of technocrats and money managers who move $2 trillion a day, seeking the highest return on capital.

The second time frame is culture. It moves more slowly, as cultural revolutions are resisted by deeper, established beliefs. The first institution to blossom under perestroika was the Russian Orthodox Church. I walked into a church near Boris Pasternak’s dacha in 1989 and heard priests and babushkas reciting the litany with perfect recall, as if seventy-two years of repression had never happened. Culture provides the slow template of change within which family, community, and religion prosper. Culture stabilizes identity, and in a fast-changing world of displacement and rootlessness, becomes an ever more important anchor.

Between culture and business is a third time frame: governance, which moves faster than culture, slower than commerce. The fourth and slowest chronology is earth, nature, and the web of life. As ephemeral as it may seem, it is the slowest clock, always present, responding to long, ancient evolutionary cycles that extend beyond any one civilization’s reckoning. Nature has the greatest inertia but the most resilience.

These chronologies often come into conflict. What makes life worthwhile and enables civilizations to endure are all the elements and qualities that have poor returns under commercial metrics: universities, temples, poetry, choirs, parks, literature, language, museums, terraced fields, long marriages, line dancing, and art. Nearly everything humans hold valuable is slow to develop and slow to change. Healthy commerce requires the governance of politics, art, culture, civil society, and nature, to slow its pace, to make it heedful, to make it pay attention to people and place. As Brand points out, business unchecked becomes criminal. Consider Russia. Look at Enron, Tyco, Unocal, WorldCom. The extermination of languages, cultures, forests, and fisheries is occurring worldwide in the interests of speeding up business, even while business itself is stressed by increasingly rapid change. The rate of change is unnerving to all, even to those who benefit. To those who are not benefiting, it is devastating.

When there was an abundant earth supporting relatively few people, it was not necessary for markets to allocate resources with an eye toward the future. On a crowded earth with failing ecosystems, that lapse will be fatal. The continuity of the human species requires a fundamental change in market structures so that they include and harmonize with longer, slower time frames. The challenge of civilization has changed, and markets must change accordingly. As effective as markets are, they are tools, not reality. Markets make great servants, but bad leaders and ridiculous religions. To impose on contemporary global trade nineteenth-century laissez-faire ideology—an economic fundamentalism that was practiced in rhetoric only—in hopes of alleviating poverty and addressing environmental degradation is like Sidney an artery to reduce high blood pressure. Trade is not the salient issue; the critical question is, Who sets the rules and who enforces them? There can be no sustainability when institutions whose primary purpose is to create money are dictating the standards.

One of the failures of the arguments opposing market globalization is the visible lack of an alternative economic model that might address the plight of the world’s poor. The failure of those making the case for globalized free trade is their inability to adequately address the results of rapid economic change in human and ecological terms, how it creates prosperity and misery and ecological degradation, roughly in equal measure, incomparable though they may seem. The worldwide diaspora of immigrants, refugees, and peasants to urban slums is growing faster than even the most optimistic forecasts of the benefits of free trade. No institution stands more solidly behind free trade than the World Bank, yet few institutions are more pessimistic about the plight of humanity. It has predicted that more than 5 billion people will receive less than $2 a day in income by 2030, and 2 billion of them will live in slums in dozens of cities with populations greater than 10 million. The future of the world is being cultivated in the despair, anger, and bleakness of the chawls of Mumbai, the favelas of Rio,
the kampong of Jakarta, the shammass of Khartoum, the pueblos jóvenes in Lima, the villa miseria of Buenos Aires, and the amijondos of Durban, nor in the Pilates studios of the Hamptons and Santa Monica. In Darwinian terms, it is a rapid breeding pool of human evolution as 200,000 new migrants join the urban poor every day. Citing theories that crime burgeons when the population of youth rises, military analysts predict that control of the slums will fall into the hands of psychopaths, lunatics, demagogic firebrands, and clan-based militias.

Mike Davis writes in Planet of Slums that the cities of the future, rather than being made of glass and steel as envisioned by earlier generations or urbanists, are instead largely constructed out of crude brick, straw, recycled plastic, cement blocks, and scrap wood. Instead of cities of light soaring toward heaven, much of the twenty-first century urban world squats in squalor, surrounded by pollution, excrement, and decay. Indeed, the one billion city-dwellers who inhabit postmodern slums might well look back with envy at the ruins of the sturdy mud homes of Çatal Hüyük in Anatolia, erected at the dawn of city life nine thousand years ago.

In his book The End of Suffering, Pankaj Mishra describes attending a conference of radical Islamists in Pakistan near the Afghan border. There 200,000 men, mostly in their teens and twenties, attended a "medieval desert fair" for the disenfranchised, where fiery speakers described centuries of humiliation at the hands of Western powers. It was a recruiting event for jihad:

It took me some time to sort out my own responses to all this. I knew about the corruptions of jihad; of the leaders grown fat on generous donations from foreign and local patrons, sending young men to poorly paid jihadi (martyrdom) in Kashmir and Afghanistan. But I hadn't expected to be moved by the casual sight in one madina of sixty young men sleeping on tattered sheets on the floor. I hadn't thought I would be saddened to think of the human waste they represented—the young men, whose ancestors had once built one of the greatest civilizations of the world, and who now lived in dysfunctional societies under governments beholden to, or in fear of, America, and who had little to look forward to, except possibly the short career of a suicide bomber. The other kind of future once laid out for them had failed. This was the future in which everyone in the world would wear a tie, work in an office or factory, practice birth control, raise a nuclear family, drive a car and pay taxes.... The forward march of history was to include only a few of them. For the rest, there would be only the elaborate illusion of progress, maintained by a thousand "aid" programmes, IMF and World Bank loans, by the talk of underdevelopment, economic liberalization and democracy. But the fantasy of modernity, held up by their state, and supported by the international political and economic system, had been powerful enough to expel and uproot them from their native villages... hundreds of millions of stupefied and powerless individuals, lured by the promise of equality and justice into a world which they had no means of understanding, whose already overstrained and partially available resources they were expected to exploit in order to hoist themselves to the level of affluence enjoyed by a small minority of middle-class people around the world.

Inuit mythology tells the story of Skeleton Woman. The tale begins with a fisherman trolling an inlet for his dinner. Suddenly he feels a heavy pull on his line, something so strong that it drags his kayak out to sea. He believes he has caught a fish so great he can eat for weeks, one so fat that he will prosper ever after, a fish so amazing that the whole village will marvel at his prowess. As the fisherman deliriously imagines fame and material ease, he reel in his line. Instead of a fish, he pulls up the decomposed, flesh-eaten carcass of a young woman who had been flung into the sea by her angry father years before. The frightened fisherman tries to free himself of Skeleton Woman, but she is so snarled in his fishing line that she is dragged behind his kayak wherever it goes. He paddles hurriedly back to shore, horrified by the trailing bones and flesh. In his haste to escape, he drags his lines over the beach and brings Skeleton Woman into his cabin, where he collapses in terror. In the retelling of this story by Clarissa Pinkola Estes, Skeleton Woman, who is still alive but cadaverous and half-eaten, represents both life and death, a specter reminding us that every beginning brings with it an end, that for all that is taken, something must be given in return. The fisherman eventually calms down and, cowering in the corner, dares to look at his "catch," asleep in the corner of the hut. He begins to feel pity for her, so he quietly creeps over and carefully disentangles the fishing line and seaweed from her hair so as not to wake her. He straightens and rearranges her bony
carcass, puts a blanket over her, and finally, no longer afraid, falls asleep. In his sleep, tears of sadness fall from his eyes. Skeleton Woman awakens and crawls across the floor, drinks the tears of the dreaming fisherman, grows a new body, and is transformed into a young woman again. 30

Like all fishermen, WTO's proponents want to catch the big one. They see few downsides to unleashing the benefits of untrammeled corporate growth. And yet death is always attached to life; all growth comes with an accounting, a reckoning. Birth and death are each other's consorts, inseparable and fast. The expansive dreams of the world's future wealth were reflected perfectly by Bill Gates III, cochair of the Seattle host committee, the world's richest man, hosting delegates at his $97 million, 66,000-square-foot house. Skeleton Woman showed up in Seattle as the uninvited guest. Dancing, drumming, ululating, marching in black alongside symbolic coffins, she wove through the sulfurous rainy streets of the night. She couldn't be killed or destroyed, no matter how much gas or pepper spray, or how many rubber bullets were used. She kept coming back and sitting in front of the police and raised her hands in peace, and was kicked, and trod upon. Skeleton Woman told the corporate delegates and the rich nations that they could not have the world, that it was not for sale, that if business was going to trade with the world, it had to recognize and honor the world, her life, and her people. She told WTO that it had to be brave enough to listen, strong enough to yield, courageous enough to give. Skeleton Woman was brought up from the depths and regained her eyes, voice, and spirit. She is about in the world, released that day and night, November 30 in Seattle, and her dreams are different. She believes that the right to self-sufficiency is a human right; she imagines a world where the means to kill people are described as not a business but a crime, where all crimes against women are crimes against the earth, and all crimes against nature are crimes against humanity, where families do not starve, fathers can work, children are never sold, and women cannot be impoverished because they choose to be mothers. Skeleton Woman does not see a time when a man holds a patent to any living thing, or where animals are factories, or where rivers belong to stockholders. Hers are deep and fearless dreams from slow time. She will not be quiet or be thrown back to sea anytime soon.

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Our immune systems, and only our immune systems, prevent us from becoming everyone else all at once. We are who we are only because we defend ourselves every moment of every day. And who we are is everything. We are pieces of others. Portraits painted somewhere between our brains and thymuses. We are the dirt we've eaten and the songs we've sung. We are the light of stars and darkness old beyond imagining. We are at once spontaneous fires and sacred water. We are faith and forgiveness. We are our own deaths and we are the eternal thought of others.

—Gerald Callahan, Faith, Madness, and Spontaneous Human Combustion

One of the beauties of biology is that its facts become our metaphors.

—Kenny Ausubel, Nature's Operating Instructions