WHITE PAPER · A GIFT TO HUMANITY

EQUICONSCISM®

The Theory of Conscious Balance — For an Economy in the Service of Life



Offered on the tenth anniversary of LP3 AG / SA · 2016–2026

DAVID FIORUCCI

LP3 AG/SA • BIEL/BIENNE • SWITZERLAND • 2026 EDITION • WWW.EQUICONSCISM.ORG

EQUICONSCISM®

The Theory of Conscious Balance —
For an Economy in the Service of Life

WHITE PAPER

DAVID FIORUCCI

LP3 AG / SA · Biel/Bienne · Switzerland
First English edition, 2026
Illustrations by Lars Hoop
Creative Commons License BY-NC-SA 4.0

Legal Notice

Equiconscism® — The Theory of Conscious Balance: For an Economy in the Service of Life White Paper. First English edition, Biel/Bienne, 2026. Translated from the French original.

Author: David Fiorucci Publisher: LP3 AG / SA, Eidochsweg 23 / Chemin du Lézard 23, 2504 Biel/Bienne, Switzerland — www.lp3leadership.com Website of the theory: www.equiconscism.org (under construction) ISBN: 978-3-9526757-4-8 (English edition; the French edition is ISBN 978-3-9526757-3-1; a German edition is planned)

© 2026 David Fiorucci — LP3 AG / SA. This white paper is offered to humanity on the tenth anniversary of LP3 AG / SA (2016–2026). Its text is licensed under **Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0)**: you may copy, share, translate, and adapt it, provided that you credit the author and the source, do not use it for commercial purposes, and distribute your adaptations under the same license. License text: https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/deed.en

Limitations: the license does not cover trademarks. Equiconscism®, SALTER®, LP3®, Octocracy®, and Cofluencer® are registered trademarks of LP3 AG / SA. The contents of the guide *SALTER® — La boussole consciente pour un monde en mutation* [SALTER®: The conscious compass for a changing world] (2026), summarized in chapter 2, remain subject to their own terms of use. Quotations from third-party works remain the property of their authors and publishers; they are reproduced under the right of quotation. The illustrations are the property of LP3 AG / SA.

Illustrations by Lars Hoop. Cover image created with the help of artificial intelligence (ChatGPT). Photograph of the author: Oliver Oettli (www.oliveroettli.ch).

Recommended citation: Fiorucci, D. (2026). *Equiconscism — The Theory of Conscious Balance: For an Economy in the Service of Life*. White paper. Biel/Bienne: LP3 AG / SA. License CC BY-NC-SA 4.0.

This publication is intended to support reflection, leadership development, and responsible decision-making. It does not constitute medical or psychotherapeutic advice, nor legal, tax, or financial advice. The data cited reflect the state of knowledge as of September 30, 2026; the verification method is described in appendix F.

To all those, everywhere on the planet, who feel that the world has lost its balance and yet know that another future is possible.

To those who seek, who doubt, who create, who connect rather than divide, who know how to listen and, at times, to be silent.

To the generations to come, to whom we owe a world more just, more beautiful, and more alive than the one we received.

Contents

Acknowledgments 6
Preface — Why This Book, Why Now, Why as a Gift 7
How to Read This Book 9
Summary — Equiconscism in a Few Pages 10

PART I — READING OUR TIMES

Chapter 1 A World Out of Balance: Anatomy of the Polycrisis 14
Chapter 2 Naming in Order to Act: From VUCA and BANI to SALTER 29
Chapter 3 The Cycles of Humanity: The End of an Age and the Promise of Renewal 36

PART II — WHAT WE HAVE TRIED

Chapter 4 A Brief Critical History of Economic Thought 53
Chapter 5 Attempts at Reconciliation: From the Best of All Possible Worlds to Peopleism 70

PART III — EQUICONSCISM

Chapter 6 Balance, Consciousness, Movement: What the Sages and the Scientists Teach Us 89
Chapter 7 Equiconscism: Definition, Principles, and Model 102
Chapter 8 The Ten Key Questions: A Compass for Everyone 123

PART IV — EMBODYING CONSCIOUS BALANCE

Chapter 9 From the Person to the Planet: Conscious Balance at Every Level 144
Chapter 10 Sectors and Professions: Conscious Balance in Practice 171

PART V — HORIZONS

Chapter 11 Beauty and Right Proportion 203
Chapter 12 Balance and Consciousness in the World's Wisdom Traditions and Religions 217
Chapter 13 Artificial Intelligence: A Multiplier of Balance or of Imbalance? The Ten Commandments of AI 230

PART VI — TAKING ACTION

Chapter 14 Putting Equiconscism into Practice 249
Chapter 15 Measuring Conscious Balance: Indicators for the Ten Questions 260
Chapter 16 Conclusion: The Hour of the Catalysts—A Call to Accountability 281

APPENDICES — TOOLS AND REFERENCES

Appendix A The Conscious Path: The Inner Journey in Five Stages 287
Appendix B Scorecards and Tools 297
Appendix C Correspondences 305
Appendix D Glossary 312
Appendix E General Bibliography 321
Appendix F A Note on Method, Quotations, and Sources 345
Appendix G About the Author and LP3 AG / SA 348

Acknowledgments

A book like this one is never written alone. It is the fruit of ten years of encounters, assignments, conversations, and questions.

My first gratitude goes to Barbara, my wife, and to our three children. They are my first place of balance, my first school of consciousness, and the most intimate reason why I believe that each of us can—and must—contribute to a better world.

I thank the LP3 Advisory Board, whose demanding yet kindly eye has accompanied the company throughout. I thank the whole LP3 and Octocracy community—trainers, practitioners, partners—who, through the Trainer Days and over these ten years, have enriched, questioned, and structured my thinking.

I thank my friend Ravi Chaudhry. Our paths crossed while we were each searching, on our own and from different angles, for the same thing: an economy that serves people and the planet. His *Capitalism to Peopleism* nourished and encouraged this book; I hope that this book, in return, will carry his work further.

Finally, I thank all the people who have crossed my professional path over more than thirty-five years, and in particular the women and men of the organizations that LP3 AG / SA has had the privilege of accompanying since 2016: leaders, teams, boards of directors, municipalities, institutions. Their questions have shaped mine. I thank the partners, friends, and readers of the LP3 columns who reread, contradicted, and enriched these pages. And I thank in advance all those who will take hold of these pages and put them to the test of life.

> *"Can an individual contribute to a better world? Can you contribute to a better world? When I think of my children, of our world, and of our economy, I come to the conclusion that not only can I make a contribution—I must."*
> — David Fiorucci, *LEADER pour une économie durable*, 2016

> *"I have resolved to start paying more attention to where I am looking from."*
> — Ravi Chaudhry, *Capitalism to Peopleism*, 2024, p. 2

> *"I am life which wills to live, in the midst of life which wills to live."*
> — Albert Schweitzer, *Kultur und Ethik*, 1923 (our translation)

> *"As for the future, your task is not to foresee it, but to enable it."*
> — Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, *Citadelle*, 1948 (our translation)

Preface — Why This Book, Why Now, Why as a Gift

In 2016, I founded LP3 with a simple conviction: leadership is not a technique; it is a responsibility. Ten years later, that conviction has broadened. I have seen brilliant organizations wear themselves out chasing goals that no longer nourished anyone. I have seen competent leaders lose sight of the meaning of what they were doing. I have seen teams that had everything—the tools, the figures, the methods—except the essential: the certainty that their work served something larger than themselves. And I have seen, conversely, municipalities, small and medium-sized businesses, families, and associations find a remarkable new energy on the day they took the time to ask themselves *to what end* they were doing what they did, and *for whom*.

Over the years, an intuition took hold of me. In the business world, success is associated with growth. In environmentalist circles, degrowth is set against it. I believe in neither as a compass. I believe that lasting and healthy success requires us to find, again and again, the **right balances**—conscious balances. In early 2025, I began to formulate this intuition. In February 2025, it found its name: **Equiconscism®**. This white paper is its provisional culmination.

Why now? Because our age has lost its balance. Climate, biodiversity, inequality, loneliness, mistrust, the manipulation of attention, the temptation of predators: crises no longer simply add up; they feed on one another. Many traditions, and several historians, describe such moments as the end of a cycle. I believe so too. But above all I believe that the end of a cycle is not fate: it is a threshold. What comes next will depend on what we do now—each of us, wherever we are.

Why a gift? Because an idea that claims to serve the common good must itself become a common good. In 2026, for LP3's tenth anniversary, I wanted to offer two things. The first was SALTER, a compass for reading the fractures of our time. The second is this book: no longer only a diagnosis, but a theory of action. It is published under an open license. You may read it, share it, translate it, teach it, contradict it, and improve it. I expect only one thing of it: that it be of use to you.

What this book is. An economic and societal theory of conscious balance, conceived as a **dynamic process** rather than as an ideal state. It has philosophical, scientific, and spiritual roots, which chapters 6, 11, and 12 explore with care. But it aims above all to be pragmatic. My friend Ravi Chaudhry proposed, in *Capitalism to Peopleism*, a vision at the scale of systems: what the economy must become, and why. My own contribution lies mainly at the levels where concrete decisions are made every day—the person, the family, the team, the company, the association, the municipality—without ever losing sight of the system as a whole. Our two approaches do not compete; they answer each other. I have also been struck by the convergences between this theory and the encyclical *Magnifica Humanitas*, published by Pope Leo XIV in May 2026: without sharing its theological foundation, Equiconscism shares several of its criteria—the dignity of every person, measure, shared responsibility, the protection of the human person in the age of artificial intelligence.

What this book is not. Neither a partisan ideology, nor a religion, nor an esoteric doctrine, nor a turnkey program. It does not promise a perfect world. It proposes a way of deciding and acting that makes the world a little more just with each decision.

I wanted this text to be demanding in substance and accessible in form. Every quotation has been checked against its source; famous but apocryphal quotations have been set aside; data are dated and referenced. I am grateful to all those who contributed to this rigor. Any errors that remain are mine, and I thank in advance the readers who will point them out to me.

One last word. On the cover of this book, a hand holds a pendulum. It does not freeze it; it accompanies it. That, I believe, is our common task. The world will not stop moving. But we can decide that this movement will no longer carry us to the extremes—and that it will become a dance once more.

David Fiorucci Biel/Bienne, 2026

How to Read This Book

This white paper has six parts and a set of appendices. It can be read straight through, but also in pieces, according to your needs.

- **Part I — Reading Our Times** (chapters 1 to 3): the diagnosis of the polycrisis, the SALTER compass, and a reading of humanity's great cycles.
- **Part II — What We Have Tried** (chapters 4 and 5): a critical history of economic thought and of the attempts to reconcile economy, society, and nature, up to Ravi Chaudhry's Peopleism.
- **Part III — Equiconscism** (chapters 6 to 8): the philosophical and scientific foundations, the definition, the principles, and the model, followed by the ten key questions. **If you are short of time, read the summary that follows first, then chapters 7 and 8.**
- **Part IV — Embodying Conscious Balance** (chapters 9 and 10): what conscious balance means for a person, a family, a company, a municipality, a state—and in twenty sectors of activity.
- **Part V — Horizons** (chapters 11 to 13): beauty and right proportion; balance and consciousness in the world's wisdom traditions and religions; artificial intelligence and its ten commandments.
- **Part VI — Taking Action** (chapters 14 to 16): implementation, indicators of conscious balance, and a call to accountability.
- **Appendices**: the Conscious Path (a personal journey in five stages), the scorecards and tools, the correspondences with Peopleism, *Magnifica Humanitas*, and the Sustainable Development Goals, a glossary, the bibliography, and the note on method.

Each chapter opens with an epigraph and closes with an **"In Brief"** box. "Focus" boxes provide definitions and facts; "In Practice" boxes provide tools you can use right away. The notes refer to primary or academic sources.

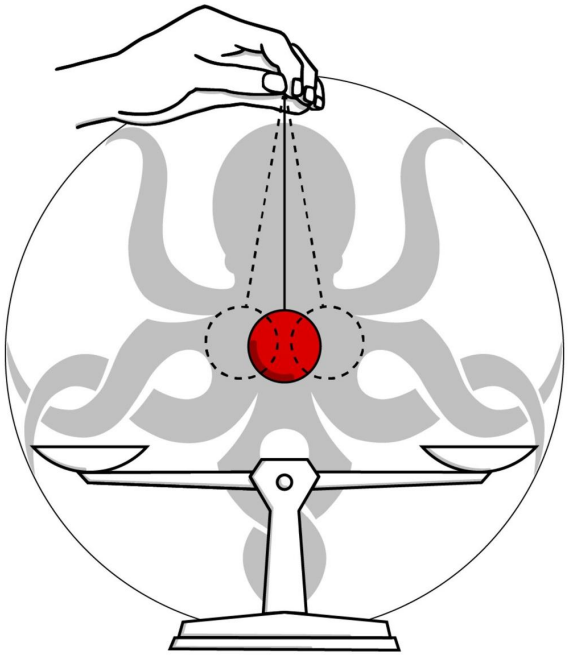
Summary — Equiconscism in a Few Pages

The diagnosis. Never has humanity possessed so much wealth, knowledge, and technology; never has it felt so fragile. Seven of the nine planetary boundaries have been transgressed, inequality is deepening, loneliness is becoming a public health issue, trust is eroding, and attention is captured by algorithms and by "engineers of chaos." These crises form a **polycrisis**: they reinforce one another (chapter 1). The VUCA and BANI frameworks describe this instability without saying what to do; **SALTER** names six fractures—Saturation, Artificiality, Lability, Tribalism, Evasion, Rupture—and sets six levers against them: Clarity, Embodied Presence, Inner Anchoring, Co-creation, Responsibility, Resonance (chapter 2). Many traditions and several theories of history read such moments as the end of a cycle. The author sees in ours the final phase of a fourth age, which may still worsen, but which carries the possibility of a renewal whose actors we are: **awakeners of consciousness** and **catalysts**, not an elite (chapter 3).

What we have tried. The great schools of economic thought—from Aristotle's *oikonomia* to Smith, Marx, Keynes, Hayek, Polanyi, Sen, and Ostrom—have each shed light on part of reality. The attempts at reconciliation—from Leibniz to the Triple Bottom Line, Hazel Henderson's win-win world, ESG, Kate Raworth's Doughnut, and Ravi Chaudhry's **Peopleism**—have opened valuable paths. But they often lack five things: **dynamics** (they describe target states more than regulatory processes), **consciousness** (they presuppose a change of outlook without equipping it), **differentiation** (uniform standards for different situations), **linking the levels** (macro or micro, rarely both), and **everyday practicability** (chapters 4 and 5).

The theory. Equiconscism® is an economic and societal theory of conscious balance. It conceives of balance not as a state to be reached but as a dynamic, continuous, and differentiated process through which people, organizations, and societies constantly adjust their decisions so that the economy, society, and the living world support one another—by consciously widening their gaze to all those, human and non-human, present and yet to come, whom these decisions touch (chapter 7).

It draws on a broad convergence: from Aristotle's *mesotes* to Cannon's homeostasis, from cybernetics to ecological resilience, from Spinoza to Hans Jonas, sages and scientists agree that living balance is dynamic, regulated, and situated, that it links the inner and the outer, and that it grows poorer as soon as a single variable is maximized (chapter 6).



The emblem of Equiconscism—drawing by Lars Hoop

Its emblem is a **pendulum**: a hand—consciousness—accompanies a red sphere—our decisions—which swings without reaching the extremes. A pendulum at rest no longer tells the time; a runaway pendulum breaks the clock. The theory articulates **three dimensions**—a measured and shared economy, an inclusive society built on solidarity, a respected and regenerated living world—and proposes operational concepts: the **corridor of right measure** (a floor of dignity and viability, a ceiling beyond which excess exhausts), **differentiated equity** (not everyone needs the same thing), **widening the gaze** (opening one's eyes, one's arms, one's heart; listening; knowing when to be silent), the **cycle of conscious balance** (Perceive, Listen, Discern, Adjust, Answer and Pass On), and **seven principles**: movement rather than state; right measure rather than the maximum; differentiated equity rather than uniformity; widening the gaze; linking the levels; regeneration rather than mere preservation; embraced responsibility.

The compass. Ten key questions make the theory practicable for everyone, from the individual to the state: Meaning and Purpose; Inner / Outer Balance; Overall Impact; Inclusion and Listening; Shared Responsibility; Timing and Cycles; Power and Consent; Regenerative Innovation; Legacy and Example; Joy and Vitality. The Ten-Question Scorecard, the Stakeholder Scorecard, and a workshop turn them into a steering tool (chapter 8 and appendix B).

Embodiment. The book applies conscious balance at every level—person, family, communities of belonging, associations, companies of all sizes, multinationals, municipalities, governments, international institutions (chapter 9)—and in twenty sectors, from energy to justice, from health to insurance, from crafts to religions (chapter 10).

Horizons. Beauty and right proportion are signs of balance, provided we distinguish facts (the golden ratio in mathematics and botany) from myths (chapter 11). All the great wisdom traditions and religions have reflected on measure, the scales, responsibility, and the golden rule: Equiconscism proposes a common grammar for them, one that requires no one to give up their faith or

their lack of faith (chapter 12). Artificial intelligence can be an ideal multiplier of balance if it is used well and properly governed; the book proposes **ten commandments of Equiconscist AI** so that it serves human dignity and the living world (chapter 13).

Taking action. A 30-day journey for a person, a 90-day road map for an organization, an approach for local and regional authorities, a three-tier dashboard, and vigilance against "equi-washing" (chapter 14). Precise indicators, proposed for each of the ten questions and at every level, and a simple, transparent **Conscious Balance Index** make it possible to track movement as well as state, without ever replacing discussion (chapter 15). The conclusion calls for accountability: not merely being responsible, but **giving an account**—to oneself, to others, to the living world, and to future generations (chapter 16).

PART I

Reading Our Times

The world's imbalance is, first of all, an imbalance in how we see.

CHAPTER 1

A World Out of Balance: Anatomy of the Polycrisis

> *"Human activities are increasingly disrupting the natural equilibrium and we will live with these consequences for hundreds and thousands of years."*
>
> — Celeste Saulo, Secretary-General of the World Meteorological Organization, *State of the Global Climate 2025* (March 23, 2026)

In the illustration "Input – Put-Put – Output" that accompanies this book (chapter 7, section 7.11, page 115), there is a detail one notices only at second glance: the storm. In the foreground, the hen clucks, the worm nourishes, the egg promises the next life. But above the henhouse the sky is darkening, and at the edge of the woods the fox is prowling. This chapter looks at the sky. It does not seek to frighten: fear is a poor counselor, and we will see that it is also a raw material for those who thrive on disorder. It seeks to see clearly.

To see clearly today, we must hold together domains that our institutions, our disciplines, and our media keep apart: climate and debt, loneliness and democracy, algorithms and biodiversity. Each of these imbalances is documented by serious bodies. What is less well documented is the way they feed one another. Since Edgar Morin, this has been called the polycrisis. We will explore it in nine stages, arriving at a thesis: the world's imbalance is, first of all, an imbalance in how we see.

1.1 The Paradox of Abundance and Want

Never has humanity possessed so much wealth, knowledge, and technical means. Never has it been able to communicate so fast, heal so well, produce so much. And yet never, perhaps, has the feeling of fragility been so widely shared.

The figures behind this paradox are well known. In 2025, the combined fortune of billionaires grew by more than 16% to reach $18.3 trillion, its highest level ever; their number exceeded 3,000 for the first time.[1] At the same time, according to the World Inequality Lab, the poorest half of humanity holds only about 2% of global wealth.[2] We have never been so connected, and yet the World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that about one person in six worldwide is affected by loneliness.[3] Its director-general, Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, summed up the paradox when presenting the 2025 report: "In this age when the possibilities to connect are endless, more and more people are finding themselves isolated and lonely."[4]

The paradox extends to the future as well. In January 2026, only 32% of respondents across the 28 countries of the Edelman Trust Barometer believed that the next generation would be better off than their own.[5] A civilization that produces more than ever, but no longer believes its children will live better, has a problem that is not merely one of production.

David Fiorucci expresses this through an anaphora: we know how to communicate instantly, but we no longer manage to understand one another; we know how to produce on a planetary scale, but we no longer know how to nourish ourselves with what is essential; we know how to measure everything, but we have forgotten what has value. This is not nostalgia. The progress is real: life expectancy, literacy, and access to energy and health care have made enormous leaps in a century. But this progress was achieved by maximizing certain variables—output, speed, yield—at the expense of others that did not appear on the dashboards: ecosystems, social bonds, time, meaning. Abundance on one side has deepened want on the other. That is the very definition of an imbalance.

> **FOCUS Abundance and Want: Four Figures**
>
> - Billionaire wealth in 2025: $18.3 trillion, up 16% in one year (Oxfam, 2026).
> - Share of global wealth held by the poorest half of humanity: about 2% (World Inequality Report 2026).
> - People affected by loneliness worldwide: about 1 in 6 (WHO, 2025).
> - People who believe the next generation will be better off: 32% (Edelman, 2026).

1.2 A Planet Under Strain

Climate: The 1.5°C Threshold Within Reach

The year 2024 was the warmest ever measured, and the first calendar year in which the global mean temperature exceeded the preindustrial level (1850–1900) by more than 1.5°C, at about 1.55°C according to the World Meteorological Organization (WMO).[6] The year 2025 followed close behind. According to the synthesis of eight datasets published by the WMO on January 14, 2026, it came in at about 1.44°C (±0.13°C) above the preindustrial level, ranking second or third among the warmest years; the eleven years 2015–2025 are the eleven warmest on record.[7] The European Union's Copernicus service, which ranks 2025 third (1.47°C), notes that the average of the three years 2023–2025 exceeded 1.5°C, a first; it estimates long-term warming at about 1.4°C and judges that the Paris Agreement's 1.5°C limit could be reached by the end of the decade.[8]

A clarification is needed here, in all honesty. The Paris Agreement targets a long-term average, calculated over some twenty years, not a single year: the 2024 overshoot does not mean that the limit has already been crossed in the sense of the Agreement. But the trajectory is clear. The WMO's annual report on the state of the global climate, published on March 23, 2026, emphasizes that Earth's energy imbalance—the difference between the energy received from the Sun and the energy the planet sends back into space—reached its highest level in 2025; that for two decades the oceans have each year absorbed energy equivalent to about eighteen times humanity's annual

energy consumption; and that sea level is about 11 cm higher than at the start of satellite measurements in 1993.[9] The secretary-general of the United Nations, António Guterres, commented: "Planet Earth is being pushed beyond its limits."[10]

Planetary Boundaries: Seven out of Nine

The concept of "planetary boundaries," proposed in 2009 by a team gathered around Johan Rockström at the Stockholm Resilience Centre, identifies nine processes that regulate the stability of the Earth system and, for each, a threshold beyond which the risk of tipping increases. In 2023, a comprehensive assessment published in *Science Advances* (Richardson et al.) concluded that six of the nine boundaries had been transgressed.[11] In September 2025, the first *Planetary Health Check* added a seventh boundary to the list: ocean acidification.[12] The boundaries now crossed are those for climate change, biosphere integrity, land-system change, freshwater, biogeochemical flows (nitrogen and phosphorus), "novel entities" (plastics, synthetic chemicals), and ocean acidification.

The *Planetary Health Check 2026*, published on September 21, 2026, by the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research (PIK), confirms this diagnosis and deepens it: the seven transgressed boundaries "are now at their highest recorded levels of transgression."[13] As chair of the *Planetary Guardians*, Hindou Oumarou Ibrahim, a Fulani activist from Chad, reads a simple message in it: we are not facing separate emergencies; everywhere at once, the planet is signaling that it has lost its balance.[14]

Yet the same report contains a lesson of hope that is too often forgotten. Two boundaries are improving: the stratospheric ozone layer and atmospheric aerosol loading.[15] The first owes much to the Montreal Protocol (1987), which organized the phasing out of ozone-depleting gases. Here is proof that humanity, when it perceives a danger, discerns its causes, and collectively adjusts its behavior, can bring a variable back into the safe zone. This is, on a planetary scale, exactly the cycle that this book proposes to practice at every scale (see chapter 7; the case of the Montreal Protocol is discussed in detail in chapter 9, section 9.9).

The Living World: A Silent Collapse

Biodiversity does not make the headlines as regularly as climate does. Its erosion is no less well documented. The global assessment of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) estimated in 2019 that about one million animal and plant species were threatened with extinction, many of them within the coming decades.[16] The Living Planet Index, published by WWF and the Zoological Society of London, measures an average decline of 73% in the size of the monitored wild vertebrate populations between 1970 and 2020; the decline reaches 85% for freshwater species.[17] This figure is often misunderstood: it does not mean that 73% of animals have disappeared, but that the monitored populations have declined on average by that proportion. It nonetheless describes a deep and continuing trend.

Water and Soil: The Foundations

Finally, two common resources condition all the others. In 2024, the Global Commission on the Economics of Water, co-chaired by, among others, Mariana Mazzucato and Johan Rockström, found that "for the first time in human history, the hydrological cycle is out of balance," and that

more than half of the world's food production comes from regions where total water storage is projected to decline.[18] As for soils, the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification estimated in 2022 that up to 40% of the planet's land is degraded.[19]

The word that recurs in these scientific reports, written independently of one another, is striking: balance. A natural equilibrium disrupted (WMO), a planet out of balance (Planetary Guardians), a hydrological cycle out of balance (Water Commission). What these institutions describe, in scientific language, is the overshooting of the ecological ceiling that this book builds into the corridor of right measure (see chapter 7).

1.3 Economies on a Knife's Edge

Debt: A Deceptive Stability

According to the International Monetary Fund's (IMF) *Global Debt Monitor*, total global debt, public and private, reached $251 trillion in 2024, or slightly more than 235% of world gross domestic product (GDP); public debt stood at 93% of GDP and private debt at 143%.[20] The IMF notes that this ratio has almost stabilized since its 2020 peak of 258%. Stabilization does not mean safety: these levels leave states little room to absorb new shocks—pandemics, wars, climate disasters—and to finance the ecological transition.

Growth, meanwhile, is running out of breath. In its *World Economic Outlook* of April 2026, the IMF forecasts global growth of 3.1% in 2026 and 3.2% in 2027, well below the 3.7% average observed between 2000 and 2019, and stresses that global activity faces a major test with the outbreak of a war in the Middle East.[21] Among the risks identified are geopolitical fragmentation, trade tensions, and productivity gains from artificial intelligence that could disappoint; the IMF adds that high public debt and eroding institutional credibility heighten vulnerabilities.

What the economist Markus Brunnermeier calls the "resilient society" sheds light on the situation: an economy optimized for maximum efficiency, with no buffers or redundancies, performs well in fair weather and breaks in the storm. In a lecture at Humboldt University of Berlin, reported by Gunnar Sohn, he compares resilience to the reed in the storm rather than to the oak.[22] The same idea appears, as we will see in chapter 2, in the "B" of BANI: *brittle*.

Inequality: Extreme Concentration

The third edition of the *World Inequality Report*, published on December 10, 2025, edited by Lucas Chancel, Ricardo Gómez-Carrera, Rowaida Moshrif, and Thomas Piketty, sets out findings that its authors themselves describe as extreme:[23]

Indicator (world)	Value
Share of global income captured by the richest 10%	more than that of the remaining 90%
Share of global income captured by the poorest half	less than 10%
Share of global wealth held by the richest 10%	about three-quarters
Share of global wealth held by the poorest half	about 2%
Wealth of the richest 0.001% (fewer than 60,000 people)	three times that of half of humanity

Source: World Inequality Lab, World Inequality Report 2026.

The report also shows that economic and ecological inequalities overlap: according to its estimates, the richest 10% are responsible for 77% of emissions linked to private capital ownership, and the richest 1% for 41%, compared with 3% for the poorest half.[24] Oxfam, for its part, points out that billionaire wealth has grown by 81% since 2020 while progress on poverty reduction has stalled, and expresses concern about how this economic concentration translates into political influence.[25]

The point here is not to condemn success or entrepreneurship: a living economy needs initiative, risk, and reward. It is to observe that beyond a certain threshold, concentration ceases to be an engine and becomes a force of imbalance—economic, social, ecological, and democratic. This is what this book calls overshooting a ceiling in the dimension of **a measured and shared economy** (see chapter 7).

GDP, a Faulty Compass

This imbalance is sustained by our measuring instruments. GDP counts market output; it counts neither the destruction of an ecosystem, nor domestic and volunteer work, nor the exhaustion of people, nor the quality of social bonds. One of its architects, the economist Simon Kuznets, warned the US Congress as early as 1934: "The welfare of a nation can, therefore, scarcely be inferred from a measurement of national income as defined above."[26] Nearly eight decades later, the Commission on the Measurement of Economic Performance and Social Progress, chaired by Joseph Stiglitz, Amartya Sen, and Jean-Paul Fitoussi, once again argued in 2009 for moving beyond GDP as an indicator of progress.[27] We will return to these efforts in chapter 5. For now, let us note that a society that maximizes what it measures, and measures only part of what counts, inevitably drifts out of alignment.

1.4 The Fraying of Social Bonds

Loneliness and Mental Health

In June 2025, the WHO Commission on Social Connection, co-chaired by Vivek Murthy and Chido Mpemba, published the first global report on the subject. Its conclusions are unambiguous: about one person in six is affected by loneliness; loneliness is associated with some 871,000 deaths a year, or about one hundred every hour; between 17% and 21% of people aged 13 to 29 report feeling lonely; the proportion reaches 24% in low-income countries, compared with 11% in high-income countries; up to one older person in three lives in social isolation.[28] Lonely people are twice as likely to suffer from depression.

Mental health, more broadly, has become a massive issue. In September 2025, the WHO estimated that more than a billion people were living with a mental health condition, the second leading cause of long-term disability worldwide; suicide caused about 727,000 deaths in 2021; depression and anxiety cost the global economy about $1 trillion a year.[29] Within organizations, Gallup measures a decline in workplace engagement: only 20% of employees described themselves as engaged in 2025, down for the second consecutive year (23% in 2023, 21% in 2024) and at its lowest level since 2020; the cost of this disengagement is estimated at about $10 trillion, or 9% of world GDP.[30]

The SALTER guide (*SALTER® — La boussole consciente pour un monde en mutation* [SALTER®: The conscious compass for a changing world]) captures this in a single line: "We are reachable, but no longer reached. We are connected, but no longer bound together."[31] Mental health is a barometer of the quality of our bonds—with ourselves, with others, with the world.

Trust: Turning Inward

The 2026 Edelman Trust Barometer, titled *Trust Amid Insularity*, describes a society that is closing in on itself. Seven people in ten say they are hesitant or unwilling to trust someone whose values, information sources, or worldview differ from their own; only 39% consult news sources with a different political leaning each week, down six points in a year.[32] Trust does not disappear: it shifts toward what is close at hand—neighbors, family, colleagues—and withdraws from national institutions and the major media. The barometer also notes that the trust gap between the highest and lowest earners has more than doubled since 2012.

Democracy: A Historic Ebb

The *Democracy Report 2026* of the V-Dem Institute (University of Gothenburg), published in March 2026, finds that the level of democracy enjoyed by the average person in the world has fallen back to that of 1978.[33] At the end of 2025, the world counted 92 autocracies and 87 democracies; 74% of the world's population, or about 6 billion people, lived in autocracies, and only 7% in liberal democracies. Forty-four countries, home to 41% of the world's population, were undergoing autocratization, and freedom of expression was declining in 44 countries in 2025, compared with five in 2000. For the first time in more than half a century, V-Dem no longer classifies the United States as a liberal democracy, but as an electoral democracy.

One may debate the methods behind these indices, and their authors do so themselves. But the trends converge from one institute to the next. Loneliness, mistrust, withdrawal, and democratic decline are not four separate crises: they are four faces of one and the same fraying of social bonds. An isolated person is more mistrustful; a mistrustful society fragments; a fragmented society deliberates poorly; a democracy that deliberates poorly loses the trust of its members. The loop closes.

1.5 Acceleration and the Attention Economy

Hartmut Rosa: When Everything Speeds Up

The German sociologist Hartmut Rosa has offered one of the most illuminating readings of our age. In *Beschleunigung* (2005; published in English as *Social Acceleration*), he distinguishes three mutually reinforcing forms of acceleration: technological acceleration (transport, communication, production), the acceleration of social change (institutions, occupations, and bodies of knowledge renew themselves faster than a generation), and the acceleration of the pace of life (doing more things in less time).[34] The paradox is that the techniques meant to save us time come with a growing sense of having too little of it. Acceleration, Rosa shows, is not an accident: it is built into the logic of dynamic stabilization of modern societies, which can sustain themselves only by growing, accelerating, and innovating.

In *Resonanz* (2016; published in English as *Resonance*), Rosa looks for the way out. The opening sentence of the original edition sets out the program: "If acceleration is the problem, then resonance may be the solution" (our translation).[35] For Rosa, resonance designates a living relationship to the world, in which we are touched and respond, without being able to command or guarantee it. Its opposite is alienation: a world fallen silent, which we exploit without hearing it any longer. The SALTER guide has made resonance the lever for its sixth fracture, rupture (see chapter 2).

Herbert Simon: A Poverty of Attention

Long before social media, the economist and future Nobel laureate Herbert A. Simon identified the central phenomenon: "What information consumes is rather obvious: it consumes the attention of its recipients. Hence a wealth of information creates a poverty of attention."[36] That was in 1971. Half a century later, attention has become the scarce resource around which a growing share of the digital economy is organized. Platforms do not primarily sell services to their users: they sell their users' attention to advertisers. Their recommendation algorithms are optimized to maximize time spent and engagement—a single variable, once again.

The effects are measurable. The researcher Gloria Mark (University of California, Irvine), who has studied attention in front of screens for twenty years, observes that the average time a person stays on one screen before switching to another has fallen from about two and a half minutes in 2004 to about 47 seconds in her recent measurements.[37] A study published in *Science* in 2018 on thousands of rumors spread on Twitter showed that false news traveled farther, faster, and more broadly than true news, notably because it elicited more surprise and emotion.[38] The World Economic Forum ranks misinformation and disinformation second among global risks over a two-year horizon in its 2026 report.[39]

The encyclical *Magnifica Humanitas* (2026) names the imbalance at stake with precision, pointing to "the frequent imbalance between the speed of technological growth and the slower development of awareness, norms, safeguards and institutions capable of governing its effects."[40] Our tools move faster than our capacity to discern what they are doing to us. We will return to this gap in connection with artificial intelligence (see chapter 13).

1.6 The Engineers of Chaos and the Hour of the Predators

No author has better described the encounter between the attention economy and the conquest of power than Giuliano da Empoli. Born in 1973, of Italian and Swiss nationality, a former adviser to Italian prime minister Matteo Renzi, founder of the think tank Volta in Milan, and a teacher at Sciences Po, he is also the author of the novel *Le Mage du Kremlin* (Gallimard, 2022; published in English as *The Wizard of the Kremlin*), winner of the Académie française's Grand Prix du roman.[41] Two of his essays shed direct light on our subject.

Les ingénieurs du chaos (2019)

Published by JC Lattès on March 20, 2019, *Les ingénieurs du chaos* (the engineers of chaos) starts from an observation: behind what the author calls the "populist carnival"—its outrageous figures, its provocations, its seemingly improvised excesses—lies methodical work.[42] Da Empoli portrays it through its artisans, often unknown to the general public: communication advisers, ideologues, and, increasingly, data specialists. He follows Gianroberto Casaleggio, architect of Italy's Five Star

Movement, a digital marketing company turned political party; Dominic Cummings, strategist of the Brexit campaign, who relied on physicists and data specialists; Steve Bannon, ideologue of Donald Trump's 2016 campaign; and Arthur Finkelstein, an American consultant who accompanied Benjamin Netanyahu's rise before advising Viktor Orbán.[43]

The essay's thesis rests on two ingredients. The first is real anger, rooted in very real social and economic causes—da Empoli does not look down on the voters of the movements he describes. The second is a communication machine originally designed for commercial purposes, which makes it possible to target each segment of the population with the message that will stir its anger or fear, with no concern for overall coherence.[44] Social networks do not create anger; they detect it, segment it, and amplify it. Within this system, the author shows, the flaws of populist leaders become virtues in the eyes of their supporters: inexperience becomes proof of authenticity, outrageousness proof of independence.[45] The essay does not conclude in fatalism: democracy can reinvent itself, provided it understands these mechanisms instead of ignoring or scorning them.

L'heure des prédateurs (2025)

Six years later, *L'heure des prédateurs* [The Hour of the Predators] (Gallimard, 2025, 151 pages) changes scale.[46] Da Empoli no longer describes advisers in the shadows, but holders of power in broad daylight. He writes, he says, in the manner of an "Aztec scribe": through images and scenes rather than concepts, through encounters in the places of power, from New York to Riyadh. The book opens with Hernán Cortés's conquest of the Aztec Empire and draws an analogy from it: for three decades, he suggests, the political leaders of Western democracies have behaved, in the face of the conquistadors of tech, like the Aztecs of the sixteenth century in the face of Cortés.[47] Fascinated and paralyzed, they have allowed a handful of private actors to accumulate unprecedented power over human behavior, through data and now through artificial intelligence.

Alongside these conquistadors, da Empoli describes a second family of predators, which he calls the "Borgians," after Cesare Borgia, the model for Machiavelli's *Prince*: leaders who govern through audacity, transgression, and shock, in contempt of domestic and international rules, and whose brutal action is presented as the answer to the powerlessness of institutions. Chaos, once the weapon of insurgents and outsiders, becomes the instrument of the powerful. The author sums up the moment in a sentence with a Machiavellian ring: "Today the hour of the predators has struck, and everywhere things are moving in such a way that all that must be settled will be settled by fire and sword."[48]

The book has been praised for the vigor of its style and debated for being more impressionistic than demonstrative, and for the thinness of the remedies it proposes.[49] It does not, however, end in fatalism. What we can take from it, for our purposes, comes down to three observations. First, predation feeds on imbalance: it thrives where attention is saturated, trust eroded, and institutions slow. Second, it wins not only by force, but through the passivity of those who could resist it. Finally, the response cannot be merely technical or legal: it is also cultural and relational, and—this is the thesis of this book—a matter of consciousness.

FOCUS The Fox in the Illustration

In the illustration "Input – Put-Put – Output" (page 115), the fox prowling around the henhouse is a nod to *L'heure des prédateurs*. It represents risks, temptations to exploit, and those who profit from disorder. Equiconscism does not deny the fox. It protects the living process—the clucking hen, the patient work that takes its time—and the community that sustains it: the henhouse, the refuge, belonging. Faced with predation, its response is not another form of predation, but a shift from "power over" to "power with" (see chapter 8, question 7, and chapter 9).

1.7 Fear and Belonging: Boris Cyrulnik's Insight

Why do so many people rally behind those who exploit their fear? The neuropsychiatrist Boris Cyrulnik has devoted a large part of his work to this question, which was for him first of all a question of survival. The publisher's description of his book *Le laboureur et les mangeurs de vent. Liberté intérieure et confortable servitude* (the plowman and the wind-eaters: inner freedom and comfortable servitude; Odile Jacob, 2022) opens with these words: "At the age of seven, I was condemned to death for a crime I knew nothing of."[50] A Jewish child under the German occupation of France, arrested in Bordeaux during the roundup of January 10, 1944, he escaped from the synagogue where those rounded up were being held, and was then hidden.

Cyrulnik is best known for having popularized the notion of resilience in France, notably with *Un merveilleux malheur* (a marvelous misfortune; Odile Jacob, 1999): the capacity to resume development after a trauma, which depends not only on a person's inner strength but on the bonds they find around them—what he calls "resilience tutors."[51] Resilience is not invulnerability; it is a relational process.

In *Le laboureur et les mangeurs de vent*, he examines the other side: why do some people become "wind-eaters," who adhere unquestioningly to the prevailing discourse, sometimes to the point of blindness, while others manage to win their inner freedom? The book's description sums up his answer in two formulas: "voluntary servitude numbs thought," and "when you howl with the wolves, you end up feeling like a wolf."[52] For Cyrulnik, the need to belong is vital; belonging to a group soothes, reassures, and gives an identity. But when fear dominates and belonging becomes exclusive and all-absorbing, it can lead people to give up judging for themselves. Conversely, sufficient emotional security—built early, and rebuilt through later bonds—gives the courage to think independently.

This reading converges with a robust finding of social psychology: the need to belong is a fundamental human motivation, and its frustration has profound effects on health, cognition, and behavior.[53] It also sheds light on the mechanics that da Empoli describes: the engineers of chaos offer substitute belongings—online "tribes" welded together by a common enemy—to people whom the fraying of social bonds has left alone.

In the spirit of Cyrulnik's work, several avenues emerge, to which we will return in chapter 9 (section 9.3): multiplying belongings rather than shutting oneself up in a single one; educating for complexity and doubt; offering collective narratives founded on cooperation rather than fear; and making culture, reading, and dialogue places of inner freedom. Here we find, in outline, one of the fractures of the SALTER guide—tribalism—and its lever, co-creation (see chapter 2).

1.8 The Polycrisis: When Crises Feed on One Another

The History of a Word

The word "polycrisis" was used as early as 1993 by Edgar Morin and Anne Brigitte Kern in *Terre-Patrie* (Seuil; published in English as *Homeland Earth*).[54] True to his complex thought, Morin argues there that contemporary crises cannot be treated in isolation, because they intertwine and amplify one another: there is no number-one problem to which all the others could be subordinated, but a set of interdependent problems. The term resurfaced in 2016 in the speeches of European Commission president Jean-Claude Juncker, confronted simultaneously with the sovereign debt crisis, the influx of refugees, terrorism, and Brexit.[55] It was popularized in October 2022 by the economic historian Adam Tooze in the *Financial Times*: "In the polycrisis the shocks are disparate, but they interact so that the whole is even more overwhelming than the sum of the parts."[56] The World Economic Forum adopted it in its *Global Risks Report* 2023.

Researchers from the Cascade Institute and the PIK, including Thomas Homer-Dixon and Johan Rockström, proposed a rigorous definition in 2024: a global polycrisis is "the causal entanglement of crises in multiple global systems in ways that significantly degrade humanity's prospects."[57] They identify three mechanisms of entanglement: **common stresses** that weaken several systems at once; **domino effects**, in which a crisis in one system triggers another; and **inter-systemic feedbacks**, in which crises amplify one another.

How Decision-Makers See It

The World Economic Forum's *Global Risks Report* 2026, based on a survey of more than 1,300 leaders and experts, describes an "age of competition." Half of respondents (50%) expect a "turbulent" or "stormy" outlook over two years, up 14 points, and 57% over ten years; only 1% foresee calm.[58] Over two years, the top three risks by severity are geoeconomic confrontation, misinformation and disinformation, and societal polarization; over ten years, they are extreme weather events, biodiversity loss and ecosystem collapse, and critical change to Earth systems. The sky in our illustration is not a gratuitous metaphor: it is how decision-makers themselves describe their horizon.

A Few Feedback Loops

What makes the polycrisis is not the sum of the figures presented in this chapter: it is their circulation. The following table offers a few examples, by way of illustration.

Starting Point	Mechanism	Feedback Effect
Global warming	Droughts, crop losses, pressure on water	Population displacement, political tensions, mistrust, paralysis of climate action
High public debt	Little fiscal room when disasters strike	Underinvestment in adaptation, greater damage, more debt
Extreme inequality	Sense of injustice, a "rigged system"	Anger exploitable by the engineers of chaos, polarization, democratic decline
Attention economy	Saturation, amplified emotions, disinformation	Mistrust of institutions and science, difficulty acting together

Starting Point	Mechanism	Feedback Effect
Loneliness and frayed social bonds	Search for substitute belongings	Tribal withdrawal, mistrust, fragile mental health
Erosion of the living world	Loss of ecosystem services (pollination, water, soils)	Pressure on food, health, and the economy

The author of this book puts it this way: the polycrisis is not a sum of crises; it is an interaction of imbalances. Hence a decisive practical consequence: we do not escape a polycrisis by treating crises one by one, each through its own ministry, discipline, or department. Treating a symptom while ignoring its loops often amounts to shifting the problem elsewhere. That is why any serious response must begin by widening the gaze.

1.9 An Imbalance of Consciousness

The Thesis

The world's imbalance is, first of all, an imbalance of consciousness. This sentence, which sums up David Fiorucci's thesis, may seem idealistic. It is not. It does not claim that structures do not matter, nor that it would suffice to "change mindsets" to reduce debt or decarbonize the economy: rules, institutions, prices, and power relations are decisive, and this book deals with them at length (see chapters 9 and 10). It asserts something else: the structures we have built reflect the way we look at the world, and they will not change lastingly as long as that way of looking does not change.

Now, the imbalances described in this chapter share three distortions of vision.

The first is **temporal myopia**: we decide on the horizon of the quarter, the electoral term, or the news feed, while the consequences of our decisions unfold over decades—or even, as the WMO reminds us, over centuries. Future generations have neither voice nor vote.

The second is **spatial and relational myopia**: we see the people involved in a decision, rarely those it affects, almost never those who are absent—the distant, the vulnerable, non-human beings. Global value chains have made invisible those who produce what we consume, and the ecosystems that pay the price of our ways of life.

The third is a **single-variable obsession**: we maximize a single quantity—GDP, yield, audience, online engagement—at the expense of all the others. Yet in a living system, maximizing one variable throws others out of balance. The encyclical *Magnifica Humanitas* says as much in its own way: "even unchecked growth can give rise to impoverishment. In an ecosystem, balance is disrupted when one species expands at the expense of others."[59]

These three distortions have one thing in common: they narrow the field of what we take into account. They are the root causes that the crises make visible. That is why Equiconscism places **widening the gaze** at the heart of its approach—seeing those involved, those affected, and those absent; human and non-human; today and tomorrow—and makes consciousness not a fourth dimension, but the hand that holds the pendulum and links the three dimensions: **a measured and shared economy**, **an inclusive society built on solidarity**, **a respected and regenerated living world** (see chapter 7).

What This Calls For

If the imbalance is first of all an imbalance in how we see, three consequences follow.

First, **no one is on the sidelines**. The polycrisis is not only the business of governments and international organizations. Our way of seeing is formed and deformed at every level: in a family, a team, a company, a municipality. It is there, at the micro and meso levels, that Equiconscism concentrates its action, while explicitly linking it to the macro level.

Second, **we must name before we act**. We do not correct what we do not perceive. The lenses of our time—VUCA, BANI, and, more recently, SALTER—are attempts to name what we are living through. Chapter 2 examines them and shows what they contribute and what they lack.

Finally, **imbalance is not fate**. The ozone layer is recovering because human beings perceived a danger, listened to science, discerned the causes, adjusted their rules, and gave an account of the results. This cycle—Perceive, Listen, Discern, Adjust, Answer and Pass On—is the one this book proposes to practice everywhere (see chapter 7). Leo XIV's encyclical warns against the risk of "letting the succession of emergencies dictate the direction of our path."[60] That is the whole question: to endure the storm, or to learn to hold our course within it.

The storm in our illustration is not about to clear. But the hen goes on clucking, and the egg goes on carrying the next life. The patient, invisible work that takes its time remains possible. It requires a sturdy henhouse, a community vigilant against the fox—and people capable of looking beyond their own navels. Before asking where to go, we still need to know where we are. That is the subject of the next chapter.

In Brief

- We are living through a paradox: never so much wealth, knowledge, and connection; never so much perceived fragility, loneliness, and mistrust of the future.
- The planet is under strain: 2024 was the first year above 1.5°C, seven of the nine planetary boundaries have been transgressed (2025–2026), and the living world, water, and soils are eroding. But the case of the ozone layer proves that collective adjustment is possible.
- Economies are moving along a knife's edge: global debt above 235% of GDP, growth below its historical average, extreme concentration of wealth, and a GDP that poorly measures what counts.
- Social bonds are fraying: loneliness (one person in six), mental health, a retreat of trust, a historic democratic decline (V-Dem 2026).
- Acceleration (Hartmut Rosa) and the attention economy (Herbert Simon) saturate our capacity for discernment; the "engineers of chaos" and the "predators" described by Giuliano da Empoli thrive on this imbalance, exploiting the fear and the need to belong analyzed by Boris Cyrulnik.
- The polycrisis (Morin and Kern, 1993; Tooze, 2022) is not a sum of crises, but an interaction of imbalances linked by feedback loops.
- This book's thesis: the world's imbalance is, first of all, an imbalance in how we see (temporal myopia, relational myopia, single-variable obsession). It calls for a conscious widening of the gaze, at every level.

Notes

1. Oxfam International, *Resisting the Rule of the Rich: Protecting Freedom from Billionaire Power*, January 19, 2026; press release "Billionaire wealth jumps three times faster in 2025 to highest peak ever," accessed September 30, 2026, https://www.oxfam.org/en/press-releases/billionaire-wealth-jumps-three-times-faster-2025-highest-peak-ever-sparking.
2. L. Chancel, R. Gómez-Carrera, R. Moshrif, and T. Piketty (eds.), *World Inequality Report 2026* (Paris: World Inequality Lab, December 10, 2025), Executive Summary, accessed September 30, 2026, https://wir2026.wid.world.
3. World Health Organization, *From loneliness to social connection: charting a path to healthier societies. Report of the WHO Commission on Social Connection* (Geneva: WHO, June 30, 2025).
4. WHO, press release "Social connection linked to improved health and reduced risk of early death," June 30, 2025, accessed September 30, 2026, https://www.who.int/news/item/30-06-2025-social-connection-linked-to-improved-heath-and-reduced-risk-of-early-death.
5. Edelman, *2026 Edelman Trust Barometer*: *Trust Amid Insularity*, January 2026 (28 countries, 33,938 respondents), "Top 10 Findings," accessed September 30, 2026, https://www.edelman.com/trust/2026/trust-barometer.
6. World Meteorological Organization, *State of the Global Climate 2024* (Geneva: WMO, March 2025; 2024: about 1.55°C ± 0.13°C above the 1850–1900 average).
7. WMO, press release "WMO confirms 2025 was one of warmest years on record," January 14, 2026, accessed September 30, 2026, https://wmo.int/news/media-centre/wmo-confirms-2025-was-one-of-warmest-years-record. The full report of March 23, 2026, gives a value of about 1.43°C.
8. Copernicus Climate Change Service (C3S), *Global Climate Highlights 2025*, January 14, 2026, accessed September 30, 2026, https://climate.copernicus.eu/copernicus-2025-was-third-hottest-year-record. The differences between datasets (1.44°C for the WMO synthesis, 1.47°C for ERA5) stem from their methods; the 2023–2025 average is 1.48°C ± 0.13°C in the WMO synthesis and exceeds 1.5°C in ERA5.
9. WMO, *State of the Global Climate 2025* (Geneva: WMO, March 23, 2026); press release "Earth's climate swings increasingly out of balance," accessed September 30, 2026, https://wmo.int/news/media-centre/earths-climate-swings-increasingly-out-of-balance.
10. Ibid. The epigraph quotation comes from the same press release.
11. K. Richardson et al., "Earth beyond six of nine planetary boundaries," *Science Advances* 9, no. 37 (September 13, 2023): eadh2458. Original concept: J. Rockström et al., "A safe operating space for humanity," *Nature* 461 (2009): pp. 472–475.
12. Planetary Boundaries Science Lab, *Planetary Health Check 2025* (Potsdam: PIK / Planetary Boundaries Science Lab, September 24, 2025); Stockholm Resilience Centre, "Seven of nine planetary boundaries now breached," September 24, 2025.
13. Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research, "Planetary Health Check 2026 finds mounting pressures across Earth's life support systems," September 21, 2026, accessed September 30, 2026, https://www.eurekalert.org/news-releases/1144209.
14. Ibid. Her words: "These are not separate emergencies; the planet is telling us, in every region at once, that it is out of balance." Paraphrase.
15. Ibid.
16. IPBES, *Global Assessment Report on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services. Summary for Policymakers* (Bonn: IPBES Secretariat, 2019).
17. WWF, *Living Planet Report 2024 – A System in Peril* (Gland: WWF, October 2024; Living Planet Index calculated with the Zoological Society of London).
18. Global Commission on the Economics of Water, *The Economics of Water*: *Valuing the Hydrological Cycle as a Global Common Good*, 2024, accessed September 30, 2026, https://economicsofwater.watercommission.org.
19. United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), *Global Land Outlook*, 2nd ed. (Bonn: UNCCD, 2022).
20. International Monetary Fund, *2025 Global Debt Monitor* (Washington: IMF, Fiscal Affairs Department, September 2025), accessed September 30, 2026, https://www.imf.org/external/datamapper/GDD/2025%20Global%20Debt%20Monitor.pdf.
21. IMF, *World Economic Outlook: Global Economy in the Shadow of War* (Washington: IMF, April 14, 2026), accessed September 30, 2026, https://www.imf.org/en/Publications/WEO/Issues/2026/04/14/world-economic-outlook-april-2026. "A major test": paraphrase.
22. M. K. Brunnermeier, *The Resilient Society* (Colorado Springs: Endeavor Literary Press, 2021). For the image of the reed and the oak: G. Sohn, "Widerstandskraft als Zukunftskategorie – Warum die Ökonomie eine neue Ordnung des Denkens braucht," June 13, 2025, report on a lecture by M. K. Brunnermeier at the Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin ("Sie ist das Schilfrohr im Sturm, nicht die Eiche").
23. World Inequality Lab, *World Inequality Report 2026*, Executive Summary, https://wir2026.wid.world/www-site/uploads/2025/11/WIR26_Executive_Summary_English.pdf, and press release "Inequality persists at a very extreme level," https://wid.world (both accessed September 30, 2026).
24. Ibid., Executive Summary, section on carbon inequality.
25. Oxfam International, *Resisting the Rule of the Rich*.
26. S. Kuznets, *National Income, 1929–1932*, Senate Document no. 124, 73rd Congress (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1934), p. 7.

27. J. E. Stiglitz, A. Sen, and J.-P. Fitoussi, *Rapport de la Commission sur la mesure des performances économiques et du progrès social* (Paris, 2009).
28. WHO, *From loneliness to social connection*; press release of June 30, 2025 (see note 4).
29. WHO, press release "Over a billion people living with mental health conditions – services require urgent scale-up," September 2, 2025, accompanying *World mental health today* and *Mental Health Atlas 2024*, accessed September 30, 2026, https://www.who.int.
30. Gallup, *State of the Global Workplace: 2026 Report* (Washington: Gallup, 2026; 2025 data; "lowest level since 2020"), accessed September 30, 2026, https://www.gallup.com/workplace/349484/state-of-the-global-workplace.aspx.
31. D. Fiorucci, *SALTER® — La boussole consciente pour un monde en mutation* (Biel/Bienne: LP3 AG / SA, 2026), foreword, p. 6.
32. Edelman, *2026 Edelman Trust Barometer*; *Global Report*, January 21, 2026, p. 14 ("I get information from sources with a different political leaning than mine at least weekly": 39%, –6 points compared with 2025), accessed September 30, 2026, https://www.edelman.com/sites/g/files/aatuss191/files/2026-01/2026%20Edelman%20Trust%20Barometer%20Global%20Report_01.21.26_0.pdf.
33. V-Dem Institute, *Democracy Report 2026: Unraveling the Democratic Era?* (Gothenburg: University of Gothenburg, March 2026), "Key Findings," https://www.v-dem.net/documents/75/V-Dem_Institute_Democracy_Report_2026_lowres.pdf; press release "Democratic Backsliding Reaches Western Democracies, with U.S. Decline 'Unprecedented'," March 17, 2026, accessed September 30, 2026, https://www.v-dem.net/publications/democracy-reports/.
34. H. Rosa, *Accélération. Une critique sociale du temps*, trans. D. Renault (Paris: La Découverte, 2010; orig. *Beschleunigung*, Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 2005).
35. H. Rosa, *Resonanz. Eine Soziologie der Weltbeziehung* (Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2016), first sentence. Original: "Wenn Beschleunigung das Problem ist, dann ist Resonanz vielleicht die Lösung." French translation: *Résonance. Une sociologie de la relation au monde* (Paris: La Découverte, 2018).
36. H. A. Simon, "Designing Organizations for an Information-Rich World," in M. Greenberger (ed.), *Computers, Communications, and the Public Interest* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1971), pp. 37–52 (here pp. 40–41).
37. G. Mark, *Attention Span: A Groundbreaking Way to Restore Balance, Happiness and Productivity* (Toronto: Hanover Square Press, 2023).
38. S. Vosoughi, D. Roy, and S. Aral, "The spread of true and false news online," *Science* 359, no. 6380 (2018): pp. 1146–1151.
39. World Economic Forum, *Global Risks Report 2026*, 21st ed. (Geneva: WEF, January 14, 2026).
40. Leo XIV, Encyclical Letter *Magnifica Humanitas* (May 15, 2026), no. 106, accessed October 16, 2026, https://www.vatican.va/content/leo-xiv/en/encyclicals/documents/20260515-magnifica-humanitas.html.
41. On the author: biographical note on Giuliano da Empoli, Éditions Gallimard; *Le Mage du Kremlin* (Paris: Gallimard, 2022; Grand Prix du roman de l'Académie française 2022).
42. G. da Empoli, *Les ingénieurs du chaos* (Paris: JC Lattès, 2019; published March 20, 2019, 200 pp.). The expression "carnaval populiste" is reported by M.-O. Padis, "Les Ingénieurs du chaos de Giuliano da Empoli," *Esprit*, 2019. Quotations from the French in this section: our translation.
43. Ibid.; publisher's description, accessed September 30, 2026, https://www.editions-jclattes.fr/livre/les-ingenieurs-du-chaos-9782709664066/; Futuribles, review, 2019.
44. Ibid.; Futuribles, review of *Les ingénieurs du chaos*, accessed September 30, 2026, https://www.futuribles.com/les-ingenieurs-du-chaos/. Paraphrase.
45. Publisher's description (JC Lattès), cited in note 43. Paraphrase.
46. G. da Empoli, *L'heure des prédateurs* (Paris: Gallimard, 2025; published April 3, 2025, 151 pp.; BnF catalog record, ISBN 978-2-07-311320-7).
47. Ibid., analogy summarized (paraphrase) from the reviews in *Causeur* ("Giuliano da Empoli: le retour des conquistadors et des Borgia," 2025) and *Culture-Tops* (2025).
48. Ibid., sentence reproduced on the back cover (publisher's description, which also mentions the "Aztec scribe" writing "through images rather than concepts"); description text, accessed September 30, 2026, https://www.leslibraires.fr/livre/9782073113207. Our translation.
49. See in particular, in French, *Benzine Magazine*, June 6, 2025, which notes that the book closes with the words "la lutte continue" (the struggle goes on).
50. B. Cyrulnik, *Le laboureur et les mangeurs de vent. Liberté intérieure et confortable servitude* (Paris: Odile Jacob, March 16, 2022), 272 pp., publisher's description (back cover), accessed September 30, 2026, https://www.odilejacob.fr/catalogue/psychologie/psychologie-generale/laboureur-et-les-mangeurs-de-vent_9782415001360.php. Our translation.
51. B. Cyrulnik, *Un merveilleux malheur* (Paris: Odile Jacob, 1999). Paraphrase.
52. Cyrulnik, *Le laboureur et les mangeurs de vent*, publisher's description. Our translation.
53. R. F. Baumeister and M. R. Leary, "The need to belong: Desire for interpersonal attachments as a fundamental human motivation," *Psychological Bulletin* 117, no. 3 (1995): pp. 497–529.
54. E. Morin and A. B. Kern, *Terre-Patrie* (Paris: Seuil, 1993). Paraphrase.
55. See V. Lähde, "The case for polycrisis as a keyword of our interconnected times," *Aeon*, August 17, 2023, accessed September 30, 2026, https://aeon.co/essays/the-case-for-polycrisis-as-a-keyword-of-our-interconnected-times.
56. A. Tooze, "Welcome to the world of the polycrisis," *Financial Times*, October 28, 2022.

57. M. Lawrence, T. Homer-Dixon, S. Janzwood, J. Rockström, O. Renn, and J. F. Donges, “Global polycrisis: the causal mechanisms of crisis entanglement,” *Global Sustainability* 7 (2024): e6.
58. World Economic Forum, *Global Risks Report 2026*; press release “Global Risks Report 2026: Geopolitical and Economic Risks Rise in New Age of Competition,” January 14, 2026, accessed September 30, 2026, https://www.weforum.org/press/2026/01/.
59. Leo XIV, *Magnifica Humanitas*, no. 113.
60. Ibid., no. 6.

CHAPTER 2

Naming in Order to Act: From VUCA and BANI to SALTER

> *"We do not need one more description of chaos. We need a map that shows where we are—and where a door can be found."*
>
> — David Fiorucci, *SALTER® — La boussole consciente pour un monde en mutation* (2026)

Naming is not a neutral act. The word we choose to describe a situation shapes what we see in it, and therefore what we do about it. The SALTER guide says so from the outset: every era develops lenses that make its own confusion bearable, and those lenses determine what we act against.[1] Chapter 1 described the polycrisis in figures. This chapter examines the words that leaders, consultants, and researchers have coined over the past forty years or so in order to think about it: VUCA, then BANI, then SALTER. It shows what each of these frameworks contributes, where it stops, and why even the finest diagnosis still calls for a wider compass.

2.1 VUCA: Describing an Unstable Environment

The acronym VUCA—*volatility*, *uncertainty*, *complexity*, *ambiguity*—was born in American military education. The U.S. Army War College introduced it into its teaching in the late 1980s—the curriculum review launched in the fall of 1987 incorporated it from the 1988 academic year onward—to describe the multipolar, less legible world that followed the bipolar confrontation of the Cold War; according to the college's own records, it drew in particular on the leadership work of Warren Bennis and Burt Nanus (*Leaders*, 1985).[2] In the 1990s, and above all in the 2000s, the term migrated into the management literature, to the point of becoming one of the most widely used acronyms in the field.

Its four terms designate distinct realities:

- **volatility**: rapid and significant change, but not necessarily unpredictable change;
- **uncertainty**: the impossibility of knowing whether an event will occur and what its consequences will be;
- **complexity**: the multiplicity of actors, of variables, and of their interconnections;
- **ambiguity**: the impossibility of reading causes and effects clearly, for lack of precedents.

In 2014, in the *Harvard Business Review*, Nathan Bennett and G. James Lemoine offered the most useful critique of the acronym: repeated so often, it sometimes serves as an excuse for giving up on planning. VUCA, they write, lumps together four distinct types of challenge, which call for four distinct types of response.[3] In the face of volatility, one builds up reserves and margins; in the face

of uncertainty, one invests in information; in the face of complexity, one restructures and brings in specialists; in the face of ambiguity, one experiments. The framework then becomes a tool for discernment.

VUCA performed a real service: it forced organizations to admit that the world was no longer predictable and that linear planning had its limits. But it remained, to borrow the SALTER guide's phrase, an "external and tactical" reading: a description of the environment intended to inform strategies of defense and adaptation, in which the human being appears as a planning variable, not as a being who feels.[4]

2.2 BANI: The Emotional Turn

On April 29, 2020, at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, the American futurist Jamais Cascio, a Distinguished Fellow at the Institute for the Future, published an article titled "Facing the Age of Chaos."[5] In it he argues that VUCA is no longer enough: to say that a situation is volatile or ambiguous no longer teaches us anything. The world has changed state, and other words are needed. He proposes BANI:

- ***Brittle***: systems that look solid shatter all at once. Cascio speaks of "illusory strength," produced by the pursuit of maximum efficiency at the cost of eliminating safety margins.
- ***Anxious***: a diffuse sense of helplessness, in which every choice seems capable of leading to disaster, amplified by the flood of information and disinformation.
- ***Nonlinear***: effects are out of all proportion to their causes; small actions produce immense consequences, and vice versa, often with time lags (the pandemic and the climate are examples).
- ***Incomprehensible***: we look for answers, but they make no sense; complexity exceeds our capacity to understand.

BANI accomplished something essential: it brought human emotion and vulnerability back into the language of strategy. Anxiety is no longer noise to be filtered out, but part of the situation itself. In fairness, it must be added that Cascio did not stop at diagnosis: for each letter he sketches a line of response—resilience and slack in the face of brittleness, empathy and mindfulness in the face of anxiety, context and flexibility in the face of nonlinearity, transparency and intuition in the face of the incomprehensible.[6] These remain, however, general orientations, with no method for putting them into practice and no indication of the level—person, team, organization, society—at which they apply.

2.3 What They Describe, What They Leave Unsaid

VUCA and BANI are intelligent and useful frameworks. They have helped thousands of organizations to shed the illusion of control. But they share three limitations.

They describe more than they orient. Their object is the environment, or the way it is experienced. They answer the question "What is the world like?" They do not answer the question that comes next in any leadership situation: "And now what?"[7] A framework that describes the envi-

ronment can suggest only strategies of adaptation: go faster, become more agile, more resilient. It cannot ask whether the direction itself is right. David Fiorucci sums it up in a phrase: these are thermometers of chaos, not compasses of consciousness.

They look at the world, not at our relationship to the world. VUCA and BANI characterize what happens to us. Yet a growing share of our difficulties stems not only from the instability of the world, but from what that instability produces in us and between us: the saturation of attention, the delegation of judgment to machines, the loss of bearings, the retreat into the group, the flight from responsibility, the loss of meaning. The problem is not only uncertainty; it is also the way we live with it.

They have been overtaken by developments since 2020. The SALTER guide identifies five that neither framework had built into its structure: generative artificial intelligence, which shifts what counts as real; the "Uberization" of communication, in which everyone broadcasts without filter or editorial responsibility; information fatigue, which paradoxically produces loneliness; the erosion of our connection to ourselves; and the flight from commitment.[8] Chapter 1 documented several of them.

2.4 SALTER: Six Fractures, Six Levers

It was to fill this gap that David Fiorucci developed SALTER. The framework was first published in LP3 column no. 57, November 25, 2025, "SALTER — Au-delà de VUCA et BANI: une lecture consciente du monde en mutation" [SALTER: Beyond VUCA and BANI—a conscious reading of a changing world], explored axis by axis in a series of articles in 2026, and then brought together in a free guide: *SALTER® — La boussole consciente pour un monde en mutation* [SALTER®: The conscious compass for a changing world] (Biel/Bienne: LP3 AG / SA, 2026).[9] The author makes clear that he did not invent it at his desk: he encountered it in conversations—in executive meetings, in boardrooms, in municipal halls—where the same sentence kept coming back, weary rather than dramatic: "We're functioning well—but something is no longer right."[10]

The name is not merely an acronym. It evokes salt (Latin *sal*), from which the guide draws three properties: salt reveals what is there; it preserves what must last; and, in excess, it makes things unusable.[11] A good diagnosis must do the first two things and refrain from the third.

The Six Axes

SALTER names six fractures of our time. Unlike VUCA and BANI, it pairs each one with a **lever**: a principle of movement that does not eliminate the fracture but makes it possible to cross.

	Fracture	Lever	Guiding Question
S	Saturation	Clarity	What is essential—and what is merely urgent?
A	Artificiality	Embodied Presence	Where does a human being still decide, and where only a model?
L	Lability	Inner Anchoring	What remains of me when everything changes?

	Fracture	Lever	Guiding Question
T	Tribalism	Co-creation	Are we building bridges or walls?
E	Evasion	Responsibility	Who really takes responsibility for what, here?
R	Rupture	Resonance	Does what we do still touch us?

Source: D. Fiorucci, SALTER® (2026), chapter 3.

In a few words, according to the guide:

- **Saturation** is the most visible and the most underestimated fracture: it does not cause collapse, but it slowly erodes the capacity for discernment. Its lever, **clarity**, is not naive simplification: it is the capacity to discern what is essential amid density, which presupposes choices and renunciations.
- **Artificiality** transforms our relationship to reality: it silently shifts what decisions rest on. Its lever, **embodied presence**, is not a rejection of technology, but a conscious rebalancing between artificial intelligence and human presence.
- **Lability** is not change itself, but the state in which change becomes continuous, accelerated, and disorienting. Its lever, **inner anchoring**, is the stability that makes it possible to evolve without dissolving.
- **Tribalism** is the tendency to withdraw into one's own group, convictions, and interests. Its lever, **co-creation**, refers to the emergence of ideas or solutions that none of the people involved could have produced alone.
- **Evasion** is the tendency not to choose, not to commit, not to own one's share when a situation becomes uncomfortable; it does not necessarily show up as inaction. Its lever, **responsibility**, rests on a simple distinction: "I am not responsible for everything, but I am always responsible for something."[12]
- **Rupture** is a loss of attunement: something goes on functioning outwardly but no longer resonates inwardly. Its lever, **resonance**—a notion borrowed from Hartmut Rosa (see chapter 1)—consists in creating the conditions under which being touched becomes possible again, without demanding it.

Three Design Principles

Three principles give SALTER its coherence. First, **every fracture is the shadow side of a strength**: saturation is the flip side of performance, artificiality that of efficiency, lability that of adaptability, tribalism that of belonging, evasion that of prudence, rupture that of professionalism. Hence a methodological rule: fighting a fracture without preserving the underlying strength weakens the system.[13] What we recognize here is a logic of balance, not of eradication. Second, **the fractures operate at every level**, from the person to the government, in a different language but with the same structure. Third, **the order of the letters is not accidental**: S and A concern our relationship to information and to reality, L and T our relationship to identity and to the group, E and R our relationship to action and to meaning.

The six fractures reinforce one another in a cascade. Saturation exhausts discernment; whoever can no longer discern delegates to systems; whoever loses touch with the ground loses their bearings; whoever has no more bearings seeks support in the group; whoever shelters in the group avoids confrontation; whoever no longer takes responsibility for anything drifts away from what matters; and whoever is in rupture no longer has the strength to choose against saturation. The guide immediately adds: "This cascade is not determinism."[14] It is a probable sequence, observed in practice, that can be interrupted at every stage.

A Diagnostic Instrument, Honest About Its Limits

The guide does not stop at naming: it offers an assessment, a maturity model, and an implementation process. Without reproducing its questionnaires here, which are subject to their own terms of use, we can outline their architecture:

- a **48-question assessment** (eight per axis), scored from 1 to 5, in which a high value signals a more intense fracture, up to level 5, the "silent crisis": the system goes on functioning while its substance erodes;
- the search for a **leverage axis**—as a rule only one, two at most—whose treatment would ease the others;
- a **maturity model** in five levels (unaware, named, addressed, anchored, regenerative), which describes the capacity to deal with the fractures, not their absence;
- a **six-step process** (set the frame, inquire, interpret together, prioritize, implement, measure the effect), with a rule of restraint: three measures at most, each entrusted to a named person who is responsible for it, with a date, a success criterion, and a stop criterion.[15]

Finally, two features set SALTER apart. The first is its **epistemic honesty**. The guide does not present itself as a validated psychometric test but as a heuristic framework, and it distinguishes three degrees: the phenomena taken individually are empirically well established (the attention economy, automation bias, social identity, the diffusion of responsibility, research on meaning); their combination into a single framework is theoretically grounded but has not been tested as a structure; the scales and thresholds come from practice, without empirical norms.[16] The second is its **scope**: SALTER is addressed as much to a person as to a team, a company, a public administration, a municipality, a government, or a political party.

> **FOCUS Two Scales Running in Opposite Directions**
>
> On the SALTER assessment, 1 corresponds to alignment (zone of lucidity) and 5 to the "silent crisis": the higher the score, the more intense the fracture. On Equiconscism's Ten-Question Scorecard (see chapter 8), the scale runs the other way: 1 = needs strengthening or absent, 5 = fully integrated. When the two tools are used together, this must always be pointed out.

The complete guide, its worksheets, and its assessment are available free of charge at www.salter.ch. This book presents its spirit; it does not replace it.

2.5 From SALTER to Equiconscism

SALTER answers a precise question: **Where are we, and what is the lever?** It is an instrument for reading the present. It does not claim to say, on its own, what a person, an organization, or a society should strive toward, nor how to arbitrate between needs that are legitimate but competing—those of a company and of its neighbors, of one generation and the next, of the economy and the living world.

Yet the guide itself points beyond itself. In its chapter on how it fits with the other approaches developed by LP3 AG / SA—LP3® for leadership, Octocracy® for governance, Cofluencer® for one's stance—it names what unites them: "The common denominator: conscious balance." All these approaches, the author writes, rest on the same conviction: "Conscious balance is neither fatalism nor naive idealism. It is a path that welcomes contradictions but refuses powerlessness."[17] And the guide's closing word presents SALTER as "a path of conscious balance."[18]

Equiconscism makes this common denominator explicit and broadens it. If SALTER is the instrument for reading the present, Equiconscism is the wider framework of meaning and action within which that diagnosis takes its place. It adds three things. First, an **orientation**: three dimensions—**a measured and shared economy**, **an inclusive society built on solidarity**, **a respected and regenerated living world**—and, for each, a corridor of right measure, with its floors and ceilings. Next, a **process**: the cycle of conscious balance (Perceive, Listen, Discern, Adjust, Answer and Pass On), in which the SALTER diagnosis chiefly feeds the first two movements. Finally, a **compass of questions**: the ten key questions, which help us discern and adjust (see chapters 7 and 8).

The correspondences between the two approaches are numerous. The following table offers an indicative reading of them, which chapter 8 develops question by question; these are not strict equivalences.

SALTER Lever	Resonant Key Question in Equiconscism
Clarity (S)	1. Meaning and Purpose
Embodied Presence (A)	3. Overall Impact; 2. Inner / Outer Balance
Inner Anchoring (L)	2. Inner / Outer Balance; 6. Timing and Cycles
Co-creation (T)	4. Inclusion and Listening; 7. Power and Consent
Responsibility (E)	5. Shared Responsibility; 7. Power and Consent; 9. Legacy and Example
Resonance (R)	10. Joy and Vitality

One might add that SALTER's highest maturity level, "regenerative," echoes the eighth key question, "Regenerative Innovation," and the third dimension of Equiconscism. Moving from one to the other is not a break: it is a widening. Where SALTER names the fractures so that they can be crossed, Equiconscism offers a way of holding the course once the door has been found.

Naming is not enough, but without naming, nothing begins. Before presenting Equiconscism itself, this book takes a detour through the long view: the cycles of humanity, and what they say—or do not say—about the moment we are living through (chapter 3).

In Brief

- Naming is not neutral: our lenses shape what we see and what we act against.
- VUCA (U.S. Army War College, late 1980s) made people accept the world's unpredictability; Bennett and Lemoine (2014) showed that its four terms call for four distinct responses.
- BANI (Jamais Cascio, 2020) brought emotion and fragility back into the language of strategy, with a few lines of response, but without a method or levels of application.
- These frameworks describe the environment; they do not say "And now what?" or whether the direction is right: they are thermometers of chaos rather than compasses.
- SALTER (David Fiorucci, 2025–2026) names six fractures—saturation, artificiality, lability, tribalism, evasion, rupture—and pairs them with six levers: clarity, embodied presence, inner anchoring, co-creation, responsibility, resonance; it offers an assessment, a maturity model, and a process, with explicit epistemic honesty (free guide at www.salter.ch).
- SALTER answers "Where are we?"; its common denominator, conscious balance, opens onto Equiconscism, a wider framework of meaning and action.

Notes

1. D. Fiorucci, SALTER® — *La boussole consciente pour un monde en mutation* (Biel/Bienne: LP3 AG / SA, 2026), ISBN 978-3-9526687-1-9, chap. 1, p. 9.
2. U.S. Army War College Library, "Who first originated the term VUCA (Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity and Ambiguity)?" LibAnswers, accessed September 30, 2026, https://usawc.libanswers.com/faq/84869—the page documents the use of the term in the curriculum from the 1988 academic year onward and mentions two competing attributions (Bennis and Nanus; General Thurman); J. H. Stiehm and J. Townsend, *The U.S. Army War College: Military Education in a Democracy* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2002); W. Bennis and B. Nanus, *Leaders: The Strategies for Taking Charge* (New York: Harper & Row, 1985).
3. N. Bennett and G. J. Lemoine, "What VUCA Really Means for You," *Harvard Business Review* 92, nos. 1/2 (January–February 2014): p. 27. The original reads: "VUCA conflates four distinct types of challenges that demand four distinct types of responses." Paraphrased in the text.
4. Fiorucci, SALTER®, chap. 1, p. 9.
5. J. Cascio, "Facing the Age of Chaos," *Medium*, April 29, 2020, accessed September 30, 2026, https://medium.com/@cascio/facing-the-age-of-chaos-b00687b1f51d. The phrase quoted comes from the sentence "Brittleness is illusory strength."
6. Ibid.
7. Fiorucci, SALTER®, chap. 1, pp. 9–10.
8. Ibid., chap. 2, p. 10.
9. Ibid., foreword, p. 6, and bibliography (chap. 23): D. Fiorucci, "SALTER — Au-delà de VUCA et BANI: une lecture consciente du monde en mutation," LP3 column no. 57, November 25, 2025.
10. Ibid., foreword, p. 6.
11. Ibid.
12. Ibid., chap. 9 (axis E), p. 38.
13. Ibid., chap. 3, p. 11.
14. Ibid., chap. 11 ("Les six axes en relation"), p. 47.
15. Ibid., parts III and IV (chaps. 12–19).
16. Ibid., chap. 4, pp. 12–13.
17. Ibid., chap. 20, p. 72.
18. Ibid., "Mot de la fin," p. 87.

CHAPTER 3

The Cycles of Humanity: The End of an Age and the Promise of Renewal

> *"The crisis consists precisely in the fact that the old is dying and the new cannot be born; in this interregnum a great variety of morbid symptoms appear."*
>
> — Antonio Gramsci, *Prison Notebooks*, notebook 3, § 34 (1930)[1]

> *"But where danger is, there grows also that which saves." (our translation)*
>
> — Friedrich Hölderlin, *Patmos* (1803)[2]

There are two ways of reading a troubled era. The first is to see it as an accident: a bad patch, a series of unfortunate shocks, after which everything will go back to "the way it was." The second is to recognize in it a moment within a larger pattern: the end of one phase, the passage to another. Chapter 1 described the polycrisis; chapter 2 gave it names with SALTER. This chapter steps back. It asks: *of what story is our time a chapter?*

Humanity has never stopped asking this question. From the Greek poets to the Indian astronomers, from the prophets of Israel to the priests of Tenochtitlan, from the Arab historians of the fourteenth century to the modelers of cliodynamics, many have seen in history a movement of rise, erosion, fall, and new beginning. We will survey these narratives and theories with respect and with rigor: quoting exactly what they say, pointing out what they are wrongly made to say, and recalling the serious objections raised against them.

At the end of this journey, we will set out a conviction—that of the author of this book: we are living through the final phase of a cycle, the darkest one; it could grow darker still; but every end of an age carries a renewal within it, and that renewal depends on us. This is not a prophecy. It is a reasoned reading, and one that commits us to act.

3.1 Why Humanity Thinks in Cycles

Before it is an idea, the cycle is an experience. Day and night, the phases of the moon, the return of the seasons, germination, flowering, fruit and seed, birth, maturity, and death: every human existence is punctuated by returns. The first calendars—agricultural, lunar, solar—were instruments for inhabiting these rhythms. It is hardly surprising, then, that human societies projected this experience onto history itself.

The historian of religions Mircea Eliade gave this intuition a famous formulation in *The Myth of the Eternal Return* (1949).[3] He contrasts "archaic man," who supposedly lived in a cyclical time regenerated by rites—each New Year reenacting the creation of the world—with modern man, who lives

in the linear, irreversible time of history, inherited, in his view, from the biblical tradition. For Eliade, cyclical time protects against what he calls the "terror of history": what repeats itself has meaning; what happens only once may seem absurd.

This opposition must be handled with care: the historian Arnaldo Momigliano showed that not all Greeks thought of time cyclically, and the Bible too has its new beginnings.[4] Cultures nearly always mix the arrow and the circle. The most accurate image is probably that of the **spiral**: we return to comparable situations, but never to the same point.

This nuance is essential for Equiconscism. The pendulum of our emblem (see chapter 7) swings and returns; but each oscillation takes place in a new context, and it can be damped or can run away. To think in cycles is not to believe that everything repeats itself. It is to learn to recognize *patterns*—so as to choose better what we do with them.

3.2 The Ages of the World in the Traditions

Many traditions describe a succession of world ages. Many—not all—see in it a decline. Some announce a renewal. We present them as **narratives** to be interpreted, not as predictions.

Hesiod: Five Races, Not Four

The oldest surviving Western account is found in Hesiod's *Works and Days* (ca. 700 BCE). It is often summarized as the myth of the "four ages." That is inaccurate. Hesiod speaks of successive **races** (*genos*) of human beings, and he counts **five**: the golden race, who lived "like gods," without toil or old age (lines 109–126); the silver race, childish and impious (lines 127–142); the bronze race, violent and warlike (lines 143–155); then—a break in the series of metals—the **race of heroes**, "nobler and more righteous," the "demi-gods" who fought before Thebes and Troy (lines 156–173); and finally the race of **iron**, our own (lines 174–201).[5]

Why this fourth race without a metal? Hesiod has to fit into his scheme the heroes of epic, whom his listeners revere and whom he cannot rank with bronze or iron. Jean-Pierre Vernant proposed reading in it a subtler structure than simple decline: the races are arranged in pairs, according to justice (*dikē*) and excess (*hybris*).[6] Be that as it may, the poet places himself in the fifth: "Would that I were not among the men of the fifth generation, but either had died before or been born afterwards. For now truly is a race of iron" (lines 174–176).[7] He describes a time when the guest is no longer respected, when children despise their parents, when Aidos (shame, a sense of restraint) and Nemesis (righteous indignation) leave the earth (lines 197–200). The wish to have been "born afterwards" has intrigued commentators: some read in it the hope of a better race to come. The text does not say so explicitly.

Ovid: Four Ages, Then the Flood

It is in the Latin poet Ovid, in the first book of the *Metamorphoses* (ca. 8 CE), that we find the **four ages**: "*Aurea prima sata est aetas*"—"Golden was the first age to be born" (I, 89)—then silver, bronze, and finally iron, "*de duro est ultima ferro*" (I, 127). The heroes have disappeared. In the age of iron, "modesty, truth, and good faith fled," replaced by cunning, violence, and "the wicked love of possessing" (*amor sceleratus habendi*, I, 131).[8] Ovid goes on: corruption reaches its height, Jupiter decrees the Flood, and two righteous people, Deucalion and Pyrrha, repopulate the earth

by throwing stones over their shoulders. Hence, the poet concludes, our nature: "*inde genus durum sumus*"—"hence we are a hard race" (I, 414). The end of an age is thus followed by a new beginning—but of a humanity that bears the hardness of its origin.

The *Yugas* of India

In the traditions of India, cosmic time unfolds in four ages, or *yugas*: **Krita** (or **Satya**), **Tretā**, **Dvāpara**, and **Kali**. The *Laws of Manu* (*Manusmṛti*, I, 68–86) set out their structure: *dharma*—the right order—stands on four "feet" in the Krita age, then loses one with each age; life span, virtue, and knowledge diminish in proportion.[9] The durations, expressed in "divine years," decrease as 4, 3, 2, 1: 4,800, 3,600, 2,400, and 1,200 divine years, twilights included. In the *Purāṇas*, one divine year equals 360 human years: the Kali Yuga therefore lasts **432,000 years**, and the complete great cycle (*mahāyuga*) 4,320,000 years.[10] The *Mahābhārata* and the *Purāṇas* describe the Kali Yuga as the age of discord, in which wealth becomes the sole criterion of worth; at its end, the avatar **Kalki** restores *dharma*, and a new Krita age begins.

Tradition fixes the beginning of the Kali Yuga in **3102 BCE** (on the night of February 17–18, Julian calendar), a date often associated with the death of Krishna. This date derives in particular from the astronomer Āryabhaṭa, who states in the *Āryabhaṭīya* (499 CE) that when he was twenty-three, 3,600 years of the Kali Yuga had elapsed.[11] One consequence is inescapable, and often forgotten: **according to the classical Puranic chronology, we are not at the end of the Kali Yuga but at its very beginning**—a little over 5,100 years out of 432,000.

Where, then, do the readings that announce the imminent end of the dark age come from? Mainly from modern reinterpretations. In 1894, in *The Holy Science*, the Bengali teacher Sri Yukteswar proposed a cycle of 24,000 years, made up of a descending and an ascending half of 12,000 years each; by his calculation, the ascending Kali Yuga ended around 1699, and we have entered an ascending Dvāpara.[12] Popularized by his disciple Paramahansa Yogananda, this reading is widespread today, but it departs from the classical texts and rests on an astronomical hypothesis (a "double sun") that astronomy does not confirm: the precession of the equinoxes, roughly 25,800 years, is explained by the slow, top-like wobble of the Earth's axis under the gravitational pull of the Moon and the Sun. René Guénon, for his part, also shortened the traditional durations: we have been in the dark age, he wrote, "for more than six thousand years already."[13] There are thus *several* Kali Yugas: that of the texts, and those of the interpreters. One must say which one is being invoked.

Daniel's Dream: The Statue of Four Metals

The Book of Daniel, in the Hebrew Bible, recounts a dream of King Nebuchadnezzar: "The head of that statue was of fine gold, its chest and arms of silver, its belly and thighs of bronze, its legs of iron, its feet partly of iron and partly of clay" (Daniel 2:32–33, our translation). A stone, "cut out without the help of any hand," strikes the statue's feet, and the whole statue collapses; the stone becomes a mountain that fills the earth. Daniel interprets: four kingdoms will follow one another, and then "the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that shall never be destroyed" (Daniel 2:44, our translation).[14] Historical criticism dates the final redaction of the book to the years 167–164 BCE, under the persecution of Antiochus IV; the four kingdoms then probably designate Babylon, the Medes, the Persians, and the Greeks. Early Christian tradition (Jerome) read them as Babylon, the Medo-Persians, Greece, and Rome. Let us hold on to the image, which has great political force:

the last kingdom is an unstable alloy of iron and clay—power and fragility mixed together—and what overthrows it comes not from any identifiable human hand but from a small stone that becomes a mountain.

The Zoroastrian Tradition: The Tree with Branches of Metal

A very similar scheme appears in a Zoroastrian text in Middle Persian, the *Zand-i Wahman Yasn* (also called the *Bahman Yasht*). In it, Zarathustra receives a vision from Ahura Mazda: a tree with **four branches**, of gold, silver, steel, and "mixed iron"; each represents a period after the revelation, the last being a time of decadence and oppression. Another chapter of the same text presents a variant with **seven branches**, from gold to mixed iron. The text then announces the coming of successive saviors, culminating in the *Sōšāns*, and the final renovation of the world (*frašgird*).[15]

The surviving form is late (end of the Sasanian period or the Islamic period, with later reworkings), but it incorporates older traditions. The kinship with Daniel is obvious; the direction of influence remains debated.[16] What matters here is that the scheme of metals circulated among Greece, Iran, and the Near East: these are less "independent revelations" confirming one another than a **common language** of antiquity for thinking about the wearing away of time.

Hopi Narratives: The "Fourth World"

The Hopi, a Pueblo people of present-day Arizona, tell how humanity passed through several worlds before emerging into this one, the **fourth**, through an opening called the *sipapu*. According to several versions recorded by ethnographers, the earlier worlds were abandoned or destroyed because life in them had become corrupt and discordant.[17] The Hopi language has a word for this state: *koyaanisqatsi*, which Godfrey Reggio's film (*Koyaanisqatsi*, 1982) popularized under the translation "life out of balance."[18]

Here, caution is a matter of respect. Much of what circulates about "Hopi prophecies" comes from Frank Waters's *Book of the Hopi* (1963) and its New Age adaptations, whose reliability has been challenged by specialists and by Hopi people themselves. The anthropologist Armin Geertz showed that "Hopi prophecy" is a living tradition, constantly reinterpreted by Hopi actors in specific political contexts, and not a fixed text foretelling the future.[19] We will therefore take only one idea from them, stated soberly: for these narratives, a world comes to an end when life in it falls out of balance, and, according to some versions, passage into the next world is reserved for those who have kept a righteous heart.

The Aztec "Suns" and the Maya Myth of 2012

The Mexica (Aztecs) believed that the world had known four "Suns," four eras destroyed in turn—by jaguars, by wind, by a rain of fire, by water (the order varies among sources). We live under the **Fifth Sun**, *Nahui Ollin* ("4 Movement"), born of the gods' sacrifice at Teotihuacan; it is destined to end in earthquakes. The main sources are the *Leyenda de los Soles* (1558, in the Codex Chimalpopoca) and the *Historia de los mexicanos por sus pinturas*; the famous Sun Stone, discovered in Mexico City in 1790, shows at its center the sign 4 Movement surrounded by the four earlier Suns.[20] None of these sources announces a Sixth Sun. The ethical consequence, for the Mexica, was that the order of the world had to be maintained tirelessly through ritual: the cosmos does not hold together on its own.

The Maya calendar, for its part, gave rise to a modern myth. In the Maya "Long Count," a cycle of thirteen *b'ak'tuns* (about 5,125 years) came to an end on **December 21, 2012**, according to the correlation accepted by most specialists. From this arose, beginning in the late 1980s (notably with José Argüelles), a wave of predictions of the end of the world or of a "planetary awakening." Yet no Maya inscription prophesies a catastrophe for that date. The only known text that refers to it in any detail, Tortuguero Monument 6 (seventh century), mentions a ceremony linked to the deity Bolon Yokte', with no catastrophe whatsoever. An inscription at Palenque even mentions a date corresponding to the year 4772 CE: for the Maya scribes, time went on.[21] December 21, 2012, has come and gone. The 2012 myth teaches us nothing about the Maya; it teaches us a great deal about our own thirst for dates.

Ragnarök and the Earth Reborn

Norse mythology, as preserved in the *Völuspá* ("The Prophecy of the Seeress"), a poem of the *Poetic Edda* written down around 1270 and probably composed around the year 1000, describes the end of a world, Ragnarök. The seeress foretells a time when "brothers will fight and bring death to one another," an "axe-age, sword-age [...], wind-age, wolf-age, before the world falls" (st. 45, our translation). The gods perish; the sun grows dark. Then: "I see the earth rise a second time from the waves, all green" (st. 59, our translation); the fields bear fruit without being sown, "all ills are healed" (st. 62, our translation).[22] In the *Prose Edda* of Snorri Sturluson (ca. 1220), a human couple, Líf and Lífþrasir, survives the catastrophe to repopulate the world. The end is not the last word.

Lurianic Kabbalah: The Breaking of the Vessels and Repair

Jewish mysticism offers a different figure, which is not a succession of ages but a drama of creation. In the teaching of Isaac Luria (1534–1572), in Safed in Galilee, handed down chiefly by his disciple Hayyim Vital (*Etz Hayyim*), creation begins with a withdrawal of God (*tzimtzum*), which leaves room for the world. The divine light is then poured into "vessels" that cannot contain it and shatter (*shevirat ha-kelim*); sparks of light are scattered and remain captive in the world. The human task is to raise them up through prayer, study, and right action: this is *tikkun*, repair.[23] Gershom Scholem read this doctrine as a response to the trauma of the expulsion from Spain (1492); Moshe Idel contested that reading, seeing it rather as an internal development of Jewish mysticism.

This figure matters to us for two reasons. The breaking is not a final failure but the condition for repair. And repair is not the work of a savior or of a group of chosen ones: it is **distributed** among all of us, in everyday acts. The expression *tikkun olam* ("repair of the world") is commonly used today, in Judaism, to designate ethical and social engagement (see chapter 12).

Comparative Table

Tradition (main source)	Number of Ages or Worlds	Current Age According to the Tradition	What Follows, According to the Texts
Hesiod, *Works and Days* (lines 109–201), ca. 700 BCE	5 races: gold, silver, bronze, heroes, iron	The 5th, the race of iron	Destruction of this race by Zeus; no new age explicitly announced

Tradition (main source)	Number of Ages or Worlds	Current Age According to the Tradition	What Follows, According to the Texts
Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, I (ca. 8 CE)	4 ages: gold, silver, bronze, iron	After the age of iron and the Flood: a new humanity, a "hard race"	The Flood, then repopulation by Deucalion and Pyrrha (already accomplished within the narrative)
India: *Manusmṛti*, *Mahābhārata*, *Purāṇas*	4 *yugas*: Krita/Satya, Tretā, Dvāpara, Kali	Kali Yuga, begun in 3102 BCE according to tradition; duration: 432,000 years	Kalki restores *dharma*; return of the Krita Yuga. (Modern variant of Sri Yukteswar, 1894: ascending Dvāpara since 1699)
Hebrew Bible, Daniel 2 (redaction ca. 167–164 BCE)	4 kingdoms: gold, silver, bronze, iron (feet of iron and clay)	The 4th kingdom (for the authors: the Greek empire)	A kingdom given by God, "that shall never be destroyed" (Daniel 2:44)
Zoroastrianism, *Zand-i Wahman Yasn* (late form, older traditions)	4 branches (gold, silver, steel, mixed iron); variant with 7 branches	The time of "mixed iron"	Successive saviors, then the *Sōšāns* and the renovation of the world (*frašgird*)
Hopi (emergence narratives recorded by ethnographers)	4 worlds according to most versions	The 4th world	Open; the "prophecies" are living interpretations, often distorted by the New Age movement
Mexica (*Leyenda de los Soles*, 1558; Sun Stone)	5 Suns	The 5th, *Nahui Ollin*	End by earthquakes; no 6th Sun in the sources
Classic Maya (Long Count)	Nested calendrical cycles (13 *b'ak'tuns* ≈ 5,125 years)	A new cycle since December 21, 2012	Time goes on (dates as late as 4772); no end of the world announced
Norse mythology, *Völuspá* (ca. 1000; ms. ca. 1270)	No numbered ages; one world and its end	Before Ragnarök	A new earth, "all green"; return of Baldr; a human couple survives
Lurianic Kabbalah (Isaac Luria, sixteenth century)	No ages: withdrawal, breaking, repair	The time of *tikkun*, unfinished	The repair of the world through the acts of all

3.3 Historical and Scholarly Readings of Cycles

From the late Middle Ages onward, historians and philosophers, and later economists and modelers, sought to describe cycles that were no longer cosmic but **social**, on the basis of observation. Their theories are uneven; all have been criticized. Yet they share an intuition: societies wear themselves out through their very successes.

Ibn Khaldun: Cohesion and Its Erosion

In his *Muqaddimah* (the "Introduction" to a universal history), the first version of which was completed in 1377, the Maghrebi scholar Ibn Khaldun forged a central concept: *'asabiyya*, esprit de corps, the solidarity of a group. A close-knit group, often coming from the margins, conquers power; its descendants settle into the city, comfort, and luxury; cohesion dissolves; another, more close-knit group replaces them. Ibn Khaldun goes so far as to estimate that a dynasty, like an individual, has a "natural life span" of about three generations, or roughly one hundred and twenty years.[24] The lesson goes beyond the history of the Maghreb: **what makes a society strong—trust, solidarity—erodes when prosperity makes people forget what made it possible.**

Vico: The Three Ages and the *Ricorso*

The Neapolitan philosopher Giambattista Vico, in his *New Science* (first edition 1725, definitive edition 1744), distinguishes three ages in the life of nations: the age of **gods** (in which everything is sacred and language is poetic), the age of **heroes** (warrior aristocracies), and the age of **men** (reason, equality, democracy or monarchy). But the rational age can itself become corrupted into a "barbarism of reflection"—a refined, calculating barbarism, worse in his view than primitive barbarism—which prepares a return (*ricorso*) to a new beginning.[25] Vico does not claim to predict dates; he describes an "ideal eternal history" that each nation runs through in its own way.

Spengler and Toynbee: Decline or Response?

In the aftermath of the First World War, Oswald Spengler published *The Decline of the West* (1918–1922): civilizations, like organisms, are born, mature, and die according to a fixed "morphology." His fatalism—the West is doomed—is the book's major limitation.

The British historian Arnold J. Toynbee, in his monumental *A Study of History* (twelve volumes, 1934–1961), opposed this determinism. For him, civilizations arise and grow by responding to **challenges** (challenge and response): a hostile environment, invasion, internal crisis. Fruitful responses are carried by **creative minorities**, which the rest of society freely imitates. Decline begins when these minorities cease to create and become **dominant minorities** that impose instead of inspiring. Toynbee was sharply criticized by historians for his generalizations; but his distinction between *inspiring* and *dominating* remains highly relevant today—we will come back to it in section 3.6.

Sorokin: The Great Cultural Fluctuations

The Russian-American sociologist Pitirim Sorokin, in *Social and Cultural Dynamics* (1937–1941), distinguishes three types of culture: **ideational** (ultimate reality is spiritual), **sensate** (only material, measurable reality counts), and, between the two, **idealistic** or integral. In *The Crisis of Our Age* (1941), he diagnosed the exhaustion of Western sensate culture and foretold a painful transition. Remarkably, in 1949 he founded at Harvard a research center on **creative altruism**, convinced that the way out of the crisis lay in the study and cultivation of altruistic love.[26] The diagnosis called for a practice.

Kondratiev and Perez: The Long Waves of the Economy

In 1925, the Russian economist Nikolai Kondratiev described long waves of about fifty years in the prices and output of capitalist economies; he was executed under Stalin in 1938. Schumpeter named these waves "Kondratiev cycles" in 1939 and linked them to clusters of innovations; their statistical reality remains debated.[27]

The Venezuelan-British economist Carlota Perez renewed this approach (*Technological Revolutions and Financial Capital*, 2002). She identifies five technological revolutions since 1771—from the Industrial Revolution to the age of information (1971). Each goes through an **installation** period driven by finance, which culminates in a bubble; then, after a **turning point** marked by a crash and institutional restructuring, a **deployment** period that can become a "golden age" if institutions redirect technology toward the common good.[28] This golden age is in no way automatic: it requires political choices. According to Perez, the digital revolution is still waiting for its own.

Strauss and Howe: The Four "Turnings"

The Americans William Strauss and Neil Howe (*Generations*, 1991; *The Fourth Turning*, 1997) describe a cycle of roughly eighty to one hundred years, the *saeculum*, divided into four "turnings" of one generation each: the **High** (institutional rebuilding), the **Awakening** (a revolt of values), the **Unraveling** (individualism and weakening institutions), and the **Crisis** (radical overhaul). In *The Fourth Turning Is Here* (2023), Neil Howe dates the start of the current crisis to 2008 and expects its resolution in the early 2030s.[29] The theory is very popular; it is also heavily criticized: centered on the United States and hard to refute, it carves history into sequences more regular than the facts allow.

Turchin: Cliodynamics

The biologist and historian Peter Turchin founded **cliodynamics** (from Clio, the muse of history), which seeks to model historical dynamics mathematically on the basis of large databases. His "structural-demographic" theory identifies three drivers of instability: **popular immiseration**, **elite overproduction** (too many aspirants for too few positions of power, hence fierce competition and the rise of counter-elites), and the **financial and political weakening of the state**. These factors trace "secular" cycles of two to three centuries, in which phases of integration alternate with phases of disintegration.[30] In 2010, in the journal *Nature*, Turchin predicted that the following decade would probably be a period of growing instability in the United States and Western Europe; a retrospective assessment published in 2020 by Turchin himself and Andrey Korotayev concludes that the forecast was borne out—a verdict that therefore still awaits confirmation by independent assessments.[31] *Ages of Discord* (2016) and *End Times* (2023) extend the analysis. But Turchin insists on one decisive point: the outcome of a crisis phase **is not written in advance**. Some societies have come through theirs by civil war; others by reforms that reduced inequality and calmed elite competition—he cites the Progressive Era and the New Deal in the United States.

Kuhn and Holling: Paradigms and the Adaptive Cycle

Two other models, from other disciplines, shed light on our subject. In *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (1962), Thomas Kuhn shows that science advances in phases: "normal science" works within a shared **paradigm**; anomalies accumulate; a crisis arises; a new paradigm takes hold.[32] The transition is never a simple addition: it changes the way of seeing. And it is precisely a change in how we see that this book calls for in economics (see chapters 4 and 5).

Finally, the ecologist Crawford S. Holling described the **adaptive cycle** of ecosystems—and, with Lance Gunderson, of social systems (*Panarchy*, 2002). It has four phases: **exploitation** (rapid growth), **conservation** (accumulation, efficiency, but growing rigidity), **release** (collapse, which Holling calls "creative destruction," like a fire in an overly dense forest), and **reorganization** (the time of possibilities, when new combinations emerge).[33] Two lessons matter to us. First, the longer the conservation phase has lasted, the more rigid the system—and the more abrupt the release. Second, reorganization draws on the system's **memory**: seeds, knowledge, institutions, ties. Chapter 6 will return to this model, which provides the scientific grounding for the dynamics of conscious balance.

René Guénon: The Traditionalist Witness

Finally, we must mention René Guénon, whom the author of this book has read closely. In *The Crisis of the Modern World* (1927), Guénon takes up the doctrine of the four ages and sees the modern West as the extreme point of the dark age: the primacy of quantity over quality, of action over contemplation. But he adds that "the end of the old world will also be the beginning of a new world,"[34] and his book closes on a note of hope: "all partial and transitory imbalances must necessarily contribute to the great total balance."[35]

This last formula naturally has much to interest a theory of balance. Yet Guénon must be read with critical distance. His thought is explicitly **antimodern**: it rejects democracy, equality, and modern "profane science" in favor of a "primordial Tradition" of which an intellectual elite would be the custodian; those who find the path, he writes, "will doubtless be few in number." The historian Mark Sedgwick has shown how this Traditionalism fed a wide range of currents in the twentieth century, some of them frankly authoritarian.[36] Equiconscism shares neither his rejection of modernity nor his elitism. What it takes from Guénon is a testimony—his critique of the "reign of quantity" echoes the critique of an economy that maximizes a single variable (see chapter 4)—and not a doctrine.

3.4 What the Cycles Say—and Do Not Say

This survey is impressive. Traditions distant in time and space, and scholarly models built on data, seem to converge: societies rise, wear out, break, and reorganize. Should we conclude that history obeys a cyclical law, and that it allows us to predict the future? No. And it is important to say why.

The first pitfall: determinism. The most powerful critique is that of Karl Popper, in *The Poverty of Historicism* (articles 1944–1945, book 1957). Popper calls "historicism" the claim to discover laws of evolution that would make it possible to prophesy the course of history. His central argument is a logical one: the course of human history depends strongly on the growth of knowledge; but we cannot predict today what we will know tomorrow—otherwise we would know it already; therefore we cannot predict the course of history.[37] Popper dedicates his book "In memory of the countless men and women of all creeds or nations or races who fell victims to the fascist and communist belief in Inexorable Laws of Historical Destiny." The great philosophies of history are not innocent: they have served to justify sacrifices in the name of the future.

The second pitfall: confirmation bias. Whoever looks for cycles finds them. The durations are elastic, the starting dates adjustable, the "signs" vague enough to apply to almost any era. Hesiod was already complaining about his own time. The 2012 announcements remind us how readily we see in the present the fulfillment of a narrative.

The third pitfall: unfalsifiability. A theory that can explain any outcome explains nothing. If the "fourth turning" ends well, the theory is confirmed; if it ends badly, it was a particularly harsh turning. The best cyclical theories—Turchin's in particular—by contrast expose themselves to refutation by making testable predictions and publishing their data. That is how they can be recognized.

The fourth pitfall: forgetting what progresses. A narrative of decline can mask massive progress: life expectancy, the retreat of extreme poverty, literacy.[38] Honesty requires holding both together: the world has never been so rich in means, and rarely so fragile in its balances (see chapter 1).

What, then, remains? The essential. Cycles are not **laws**; they are **mirrors** and **narratives of orientation**. As mirrors, they help us recognize recurring configurations: cohesion wearing away (Ibn Khaldun), the creative minority that becomes dominant (Toynbee), finance decoupling from production (Perez), elites too numerous for too few places (Turchin), the system too rigid to absorb a shock (Holling). As narratives, they give meaning to hardship: they remind us that a crisis is a passage and not an end. In this respect, they are precious—provided we never forget Popper's lesson: the future is not written, and that is precisely why our actions matter.

> **FOCUS The Confusion of "Fourths"**
>
> The number four recurs everywhere—but it does not designate the same thing.
>
> - The **fourth age** (the Kali Yuga, Ovid's age of iron, Daniel's fourth kingdom): a mythical scale of centuries or millennia.
> - The Hopi **Fourth World**: the present world, in an emergence narrative.
> - The **fourth turning** (Strauss and Howe): a phase of about twenty years in a cycle of eighty to one hundred years.
> - Kondratiev's **winter**: the fourth "season" of an economic wave of about fifty years.
> - Holling's **release** and **reorganization**: the third and fourth phases of an adaptive cycle, at every scale. Bringing these figures together is legitimate as analogy; adding them up as "proofs" is not.

3.5 The Author's Thesis: The Final Phase of a Fourth Age

With these precautions in place, it is possible—and necessary—to take a position. David Fiorucci is convinced that we are living through **the final phase of a fourth age**: the dark, descending time of a cycle, the one the ancients called the age of iron and that contemporary models call crisis, unraveling, or release. He is also convinced that the situation could deteriorate further before it improves. And he is convinced that this end of an age carries within it a renewal of which we can be the agents. This conviction rests neither on a date nor on a prophecy. It rests on a **convergence of signs** that the lenses presented above, each in its own way, allow us to recognize.

The first sign: the exhaustion of a narrative. The narrative of unlimited growth—produce more, consume more, and everything else will follow—has carried two centuries of unprecedented material prosperity. Today it is running up against the physical limits of the planet: in 2024, for the first time over a calendar year, the global average temperature exceeded the preindustrial level by more than 1.5°C (1.60°C according to Copernicus, about 1.55°C according to the WMO's synthesis; see chapter 1).[39] In Holling's language, this is the signature of a prolonged conservation phase: a highly efficient, highly interconnected system that is less and less able to absorb shocks. In Perez's, it is a technological revolution whose golden age has not yet been instituted.

The second sign: fragmentation. Societies are polarizing, trust is crumbling, and belonging is narrowing into tribes—what SALTER calls the fracture of **tribalism** (see chapter 2). This is the erosion of Ibn Khaldun's *'asabiyya* on the scale of entire societies; it is Strauss and Howe's "Unraveling."

The third sign: predation. When common rules weaken, those who do not trouble themselves with rules thrive. Giuliano da Empoli has described this "hour of the predators" (see chapter 1). Turchin offers a structural reading of it: the concentration of wealth and elite overproduction fuel unrestrained competition, whose losers become radicalized counter-elites.

The fourth sign: the loss of meaning. Many of our contemporaries no longer know what the things they do are for. This is Sorokin's exhausted "sensate culture," Vico's "barbarism of reflection"—an immense technical intelligence in the service of ends that no one questions anymore. It is also what Hesiod expressed when he said that Aidos and Nemesis—restraint and the sense of what is just—had left the earth.

Why might this get worse still? For Holling, the release is all the more abrupt the longer the rigidity has lasted. For Turchin, phases of disintegration often last more than a decade, and their outcomes vary. And Gramsci said it: in the interregnum, "a great variety of morbid symptoms appear." This is not catastrophism. It is a refusal to promise a quick return to normal—a promise that demobilizes and disappoints.

Why, then, speak of renewal? Because all the patterns studied in this chapter—myths and models alike—agree on one point: **the end of an age is not the end**. After Ovid's age of iron, a new humanity; after Ragnarök, a green earth; after the breaking of the vessels, repair; after Holling's release, reorganization; after Strauss and Howe's Crisis, a new High; after Perez's turning point, a possible golden age. But none of these patterns guarantees that the renewal will be **better**. Ovid's Flood produces a "hard race"; the forest that grows back after a fire may be poorer than the one that burned; a reorganization phase may also install an authoritarian order. Renewal is a *possibility*, not a *promise already kept*. It is in this gap between possibility and certainty that our responsibility lies.

This reading converges, by different paths, with the two texts that accompany this book. Ravi Chaudhry, who reads history as a progression through stages rather than as a cycle, describes our era as a "watershed moment": "a moment when history ceases to determine our future."[40] And the encyclical *Magnifica Humanitas*, which does not share a cyclical reading of history, likewise rejects fatalism: "We do not consider the present as a predetermined fate, but an opportunity for personal and collective conversion" (no. 210).[41] Cycle, progression, or theological hope: the foundations differ, but the criterion converges. The moment is a turning point, and it is open.

Key question 6 of Equiconscism translates this conviction into practice: **"Where are we in the natural cycle of this project or this community, and what is the right rhythm for the next step?"** (see chapter 8). It applies to a company, a municipality, or a family as much as to a civilization.

3.6 Agents of Renewal: Awakeners of Consciousness and Catalysts

If renewal is not automatic, who carries it? Traditions and theories answer in a strikingly consistent way: not the masses all at once, not a savior, but people and groups who begin—and then draw others along.

Creative Minorities, Not Elites

Toynbee spoke of **creative minorities**. The word "minority" can be troubling: in Guénon and in certain esoteric readings, it has served to imagine a "spiritual elite" of initiates. Equiconscism rejects that reading. Toynbee himself supplies the antidote: a creative minority ceases to be one as soon as it believes itself superior and seeks to dominate; it then becomes a dominant minority, a sign of decline. What makes a minority fruitful is that it **inspires** and can be freely imitated. It is open to all, or it is nothing.

We will therefore call **awakeners of consciousness** those who, in their own setting, help others see what is at stake—not because they know better, but because they ask the questions that habit had silenced. And we will call **catalysts** those who allow a change that was already possible finally to happen. These are ordinary people: a teacher who opens her classroom to the neighborhood; a mayor who convenes a citizens' assembly before deciding; a craftsman who repairs rather than replaces; a caregiver who takes the time to listen; a business leader who shares the value created; a parent who passes on a taste for measure. No one is charged with "waking up" others. Each of us can, in our own measure, make visible what matters.

The Catalyst: A Precise Metaphor

The word "catalyst" is often used loosely. It deserves to be taken seriously, because its scientific definition is illuminating. The International Union of Pure and Applied Chemistry (IUPAC) defines a catalyst as "a substance that increases the rate of a reaction without modifying the overall standard Gibbs energy change in the reaction."[42] Concretely, the catalyst opens a **different reaction pathway**, whose **activation energy**—the "step" that must be climbed for the reaction to get going—is lower. It takes part in the reaction, but it is **regenerated** at the end of each cycle: it is not consumed.

Each of these features has a bearing on our subject.

- **The catalyst lowers the threshold; it does not force.** Many desirable changes are "favorable" yet do not get started, because the initial step is too high: fear, habit, the cost of the first move, the loneliness of the one who begins. A person acting as a catalyst makes that first step easier—by showing that it is possible, by offering a framework, by taking it together with others.
- **The catalyst does not change the final equilibrium; it makes it possible to reach it.** Because it does not alter the Gibbs energy of the reaction, a catalyst cannot make an impossible reaction possible, nor shift the position of equilibrium: it speeds up the reaction and its reverse equally. The lesson is one of humility: one cannot catalyze just anything. One helps bring about what the situation, real needs, and people's aspirations already carry within them. This is what distinguishes the catalyst from the manipulator.
- **The catalyst is not consumed.** A change that exhausts those who carry it is not sustainable. In chemistry, a catalyst can be "poisoned" and lose its effectiveness. Activist burnout is the poisoning of human catalysts (see chapter 14). Taking care of oneself is not a luxury: it is the condition for carrying on.
- **Life is catalysis.** Enzymes, biological catalysts, make possible at body temperature reactions that without them would be infinitely slow. The entire living world rests on discreet catalysts, present in small quantities, acting everywhere.

How Many Does It Take?

A sentence attributed to the anthropologist Margaret Mead circulates widely: "*Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world…*" We flag it for what it is: an **unsourced attribution**, whose origin we have been unable to trace in any of Mead's published writings.[43] We will therefore not quote it as authentic.

Research offers firmer, and more nuanced, support. In 2018, Damon Centola and his colleagues published in the journal *Science* an experiment that has since become famous: in online groups of twenty people who had established a convention (a name given to a face), a committed minority succeeded in tipping the norm of the whole group once it reached a **critical mass of about 25%**; below that, it almost always failed.[44] The authors stress that this threshold depends on conditions (notably on the participants' "memory") and that a laboratory experiment does not reproduce the complexity of real societies. For her part, the political scientist Erica Chenoweth observed that, in her database, nearly all civil resistance campaigns that had actively mobilized at least 3.5% of the population had succeeded; she herself insists that this is a descriptive regularity and not a law, and notes that the success rate of such campaigns has fallen markedly since 2010.[45]

Two cautious lessons emerge. **It is not necessary to convince everyone** for a norm to change. But **it is not enough to be a handful**: there must be enough people, steadfast and connected—and they must respond to a real need. This is exactly what the catalyst metaphor says.

Beginning Again: Natality

Hannah Arendt gave this hope its strongest philosophical formulation. At the end of *The Human Condition* (1958), she writes: "The miracle that saves the world, the realm of human affairs, from its normal, 'natural' ruin is ultimately the fact of natality, in which the faculty of action is ontologically rooted."[46] Because human beings are born, something new can begin. Cycles describe the slope of things; natality reminds us that every person is a possible beginning. That is why Equiconscism does not hand the future over to a law of history: it entrusts it to the consciousness of those who act.

The cycle of conscious balance (see chapter 7) gives this action a simple form: **Perceive** where we are in the cycle; **Listen** to those who bear its harshness; **Discern** what must end and what deserves to be passed on; **Adjust** our decisions with measure; **Answer and Pass On**, so that memory nourishes reorganization. Holling showed it: a system reorganizes itself from what it has kept. Our knowledge, our ties, our just institutions, and our practices of measure are the seeds of the next cycle.

IN PRACTICE **The Cycle Review**

Once a quarter or once a year—as a team, as a family, or in a municipal council—take an hour to place your project within the four phases of the adaptive cycle:

1. **Growth**: What is starting up and needs momentum?
2. **Conservation**: What is working well but becoming rigid? What margins have we lost?
3. **Release**: What is coming to an end—and what are we holding on to out of habit?
4. **Reorganization**: What ideas, what people, what new alliances are emerging? Then ask yourselves two questions. What must we let come to an end? What must we absolutely pass on? Finish with one concrete commitment—just one—and name the person who will give an account of it at the next review.

KEY QUESTION **Key Question 6 — Timing and Cycles**

Where are we in the natural cycle of this project or this community, and what is the right rhythm for the next step?

In Brief

- Humanity thinks in cycles because it lives in rhythms; the most accurate figure is not the circle but the spiral: we return to comparable situations, never to the same point.
- The traditions describe world ages with precision and diversity: five races in Hesiod, four ages in Ovid, four *yugas* in India (the Kali Yuga begins in 3102 BCE according to tradition and lasts 432,000 years), four kingdoms in Daniel, five Aztec Suns; the "Maya myth of 2012" is a modern invention.
- The scholarly readings—Ibn Khaldun, Vico, Toynbee, Sorokin, Kondratiev, Perez, Strauss and Howe, Turchin, Kuhn, Holling—describe societies that wear themselves out through their very successes and reorganize after a crisis.
- Cycles are not laws: Popper showed that history cannot be predicted; cyclical frameworks are mirrors and narratives of orientation, exposed to confirmation bias.
- The author is convinced that we are living through the final phase of a fourth age—the exhaustion of the narrative of unlimited growth, fragmentation, predation, the loss of meaning—that things could get worse still, but that this end of an age opens onto a renewal that is possible, not guaranteed.
- This renewal rests on awakeners of consciousness and on catalysts: ordinary people, never an elite, who lower the threshold of change without forcing it and without burning themselves out.
- Critical mass exists (about 25% in the experiment by Centola et al., 2018), but it is not a law: there must be enough people, steadfast and connected—and they must respond to a real need.

Notes

1. Antonio Gramsci, *Quaderni del carcere*, critical ed. Valentino Gerratana (Turin: Einaudi, 1975), notebook 3, § 34 (1930): "La crisi consiste appunto nel fatto che il vecchio muore e il nuovo non può nascere: in questo interregno si verificano i fenomeni morbosi più svariati." English trans. Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1971), p. 276. French trans.: *Cahiers de prison*, ed. Robert Paris (Paris: Gallimard), vol. I, notebook 3, § 34. The version current in French, "Le vieux monde se meurt… et dans ce clair-obscur surgissent les monstres" (The old world is dying… and in this chiaroscuro monsters emerge), is an apocryphal paraphrase.
2. Friedrich Hölderlin, *Patmos* (hymn, 1803). Original: "Wo aber Gefahr ist, wächst / Das Rettende auch."
3. Mircea Eliade, *Le Mythe de l'éternel retour. Archétypes et répétition* (Paris: Gallimard, 1949; repr. "Folio essais").
4. Arnaldo Momigliano, "Time in Ancient Historiography," *History and Theory*, Beiheft 6 (1966), pp. 1–23.
5. Hesiod, *Works and Days*, lines 106–201. Standard French translation: Paul Mazon (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, CUF, 1928). The short phrases quoted in English follow H. G. Evelyn-White's translation (see note 7).
6. Jean-Pierre Vernant, "Le mythe hésiodique des races. Essai d'analyse structurale" (1960), reprinted in *Mythe et pensée chez les Grecs* (Paris: Maspero, 1965).
7. Hesiod, *Works and Days*, lines 174–176, trans. H. G. Evelyn-White (Loeb, 1914).
8. Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, I, 89–150 (the four ages); I, 253–415 (the Flood, Deucalion and Pyrrha); "inde genus durum sumus experiensque laborum" (I, 414). Our translation.
9. *Manusmṛti* (Laws of Manu), I, 68–86. English trans.: Patrick Olivelle, *Manu's Code of Law* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).
10. See in particular *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*, I, 3 (durations: 4,000, 3,000, 2,000, and 1,000 divine years, plus the twilights, for a total of 12,000; English trans. H. H. Wilson, *The Vishnu Purana*, London, 1840, accessed September 30, 2026, https://sacred-texts.com/hin/vp/vp037.htm); IV, 24 and VI, 1 (description of the Kali Yuga and of Kalki). Luis González-Reimann, *The Mahābhārata and the Yugas* (New York: Peter Lang, 2002), for the history of the doctrine.
11. Āryabhaṭa, *Āryabhaṭīya*, Kālakriyāpāda, 10 (499 CE); English trans. Walter Eugene Clark, *The Āryabhaṭīya of Āryabhaṭa* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1930). The date of February 17/18, 3102 BCE (Julian calendar) is the epoch adopted by classical Indian astronomy (*Sūrya Siddhānta*).
12. Swami Sri Yukteswar Giri, *The Holy Science* (*Kaivalya Darsanam*), 1894, introduction. French trans.: *La Science sacrée*, Self-Realization Fellowship.
13. René Guénon, *La Crise du monde moderne* (Paris: Bossard, 1927; repr. Paris: Gallimard, "Folio essais"), chap. I, "L'âge sombre." Guénon developed his shortened durations in "Quelques remarques sur la doctrine des cycles cosmiques" (1938), reprinted in *Formes traditionnelles et cycles cosmiques* (Paris: Gallimard, 1970). Quotations from Guénon in this chapter: our translation.
14. Daniel 2:31–45; our translation (the French edition of this book quotes the Louis Segond version, 1910).
15. *Zand-i Wahman Yasn*, chap. 1 (four-branched tree) and chap. 3 (seven-branched tree). Reference edition: Carlo G. Cereti, *The Zand ī Wahman Yasn: A Zoroastrian Apocalypse* (Rome: IsMEO, 1995).
16. Werner Sundermann, "Bahman Yašt," *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, vol. III, fasc. 5 (1988), accessed September 30, 2026, https://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/bahman-yast-middle-persian-apocalyptical-text/, which summarizes the positions of A. Hultgård (Iranian influence on Daniel) and of E. Bickerman or J. Duchesne-Guillemin (influence in the opposite direction).
17. Harold Courlander, *The Fourth World of the Hopis* (New York: Crown, 1971).
18. Godfrey Reggio, *Koyaanisqatsi*, film, 1982 (closing title card, which gives several translations of the word, including "life out of balance").
19. Armin W. Geertz, *The Invention of Prophecy: Continuity and Meaning in Hopi Indian Religion* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994). Frank Waters, *Book of the Hopi* (New York: Viking, 1963).
20. *Leyenda de los Soles* (1558), in the Codex Chimalpopoca; English trans. John Bierhorst, *History and Mythology of the Aztecs: The Codex Chimalpopoca* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1992); *Historia de los mexicanos por sus pinturas* (ca. 1530–1540). Sun Stone: Museo Nacional de Antropología, Mexico City.
21. David Stuart, *The Order of Days: The Maya World and the Truth about 2012* (New York: Harmony Books, 2011). On Tortuguero Monument 6 and on the Palenque date (Temple of the Inscriptions) corresponding to October 21, 4772.
22. *Völuspá*, st. 45, 59, and 62 (numbering of Henry Adams Bellows's English translation, *The Poetic Edda*, New York, 1923; the numbering varies from one edition to another). Standard French translation: Régis Boyer, *L'Edda poétique* (Paris: Fayard, 1992). Snorri Sturluson, *Gylfaginning*, chap. 53.
23. Gershom Scholem, *Les Grands Courants de la mystique juive* (Paris: Payot, 1950; English original 1941), seventh lecture; Moshe Idel, *Kabbalah: New Perspectives* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988).
24. Ibn Khaldun, *Muqaddimah*, book I, chap. III, § 12 ("Dynasties have a natural life span like individuals"). English trans. Franz Rosenthal, *The Muqaddimah* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1958); French trans. Abdesselam Cheddadi, *Le Livre des exemples* (Paris: Gallimard, "Bibliothèque de la Pléiade," 2002).
25. Giambattista Vico, *The New Science* (1744), book V and "Conclusion of the Work" ("barbarie della riflessione," § 1106 in Fausto Nicolini's numbering). French trans. Alain Pons, *La Science nouvelle* (Paris: Fayard, 2001).
26. Pitirim A. Sorokin, *Social and Cultural Dynamics*, 4 vols. (New York: American Book Company, 1937–1941); *The Crisis of Our Age* (New York: Dutton, 1941). Harvard Research Center in Creative Altruism, founded in 1949.

27. Nikolai D. Kondratiev, "The Major Economic Cycles" (1925; German trans. 1926); Joseph A. Schumpeter, *Business Cycles* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1939).
28. Carlota Perez, *Technological Revolutions and Financial Capital: The Dynamics of Bubbles and Golden Ages* (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, 2002).
29. William Strauss and Neil Howe, *The Fourth Turning: An American Prophecy* (New York: Broadway Books, 1997); Neil Howe, *The Fourth Turning Is Here* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2023).
30. Peter Turchin and Sergey A. Nefedov, *Secular Cycles* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009); Peter Turchin, *Ages of Discord* (Chaplin, CT: Beresta Books, 2016); *End Times: Elites, Counter-Elites, and the Path of Political Disintegration* (New York: Penguin Press, 2023).
31. Peter Turchin, "Political instability may be a contributor in the coming decade," *Nature* 463 (2010): p. 608; Peter Turchin and Andrey Korotayev, "The 2010 structural-demographic forecast for the 2010–2020 decade: A retrospective assessment," *PLoS ONE* 15, no. 8 (2020): e0237458.
32. Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962); French trans. *La Structure des révolutions scientifiques* (Paris: Flammarion, 1972).
33. C. S. Holling, "Resilience and Stability of Ecological Systems," *Annual Review of Ecology and Systematics* 4 (1973): pp. 1–23; Lance H. Gunderson and C. S. Holling, eds., *Panarchy: Understanding Transformations in Human and Natural Systems* (Washington: Island Press, 2002).
34. Guénon, *La Crise du monde moderne*, chap. I, "L'âge sombre."
35. Ibid., chap. IX, "Quelques conclusions" (last page). The passage ends with the motto *Vincit omnia Veritas*. It does not appear in *Le Règne de la quantité et les signes des temps* (1945), contrary to what some online sources state.
36. Mark Sedgwick, *Against the Modern World: Traditionalism and the Secret Intellectual History of the Twentieth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).
37. Karl R. Popper, *The Poverty of Historicism* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1957; first published in *Economica*, 1944–1945), preface (argument) and dedication page; French trans. Hervé Rousseau, *Misère de l'historicisme* (Paris: Plon, 1956). Argument summarized here by us.
38. Hans Rosling (with Ola Rosling and Anna Rosling Rönnlund), *Factfulness* (Paris: Flammarion, 2019; orig. 2018); Steven Pinker, *Le Triomphe des Lumières* (Paris: Les Arènes, 2018; orig. *Enlightenment Now*, 2018).
39. Copernicus Climate Change Service, "Global Climate Highlights 2024," January 2025, accessed September 30, 2026, https://climate.copernicus.eu/global-climate-highlights-2024. Copernicus points out that one or two years above 1.5°C do not mean that the Paris Agreement target, which is measured over several decades, has already been exceeded.
40. Ravi Chaudhry, *Capitalism to Peopleism: Inspiring a Leadership Transformation* (New Delhi: Simon & Schuster India, 2024), p. 6.
41. Leo XIV, Encyclical Letter *Magnifica Humanitas* (May 15, 2026), no. 210, accessed October 16, 2026, https://www.vatican.va/content/leo-xiv/en/encyclicals/documents/20260515-magnifica-humanitas.html.
42. IUPAC, *Compendium of Chemical Terminology* ("Gold Book"), s.v. "catalyst," accessed September 30, 2026, https://doi.org/10.1351/goldbook.C00876, based on "A glossary of terms used in chemical kinetics, including reaction dynamics (IUPAC Recommendations 1996)," *Pure and Applied Chemistry* 68 (1996): p. 149.
43. On this attribution, see the "Frequently Asked Questions" section of the website of the Institute for Intercultural Studies (New York), which holds the rights to Margaret Mead's work: www.interculturalstudies.org/faq.html, now offline; archived copy of June 29, 2026: http://web.archive.org/web/20260629231416/http://www.interculturalstudies.org/faq.html.
44. Damon Centola, Joshua Becker, Devon Brackbill, and Andrea Baronchelli, "Experimental evidence for tipping points in social convention," *Science* 360, no. 6393 (2018): pp. 1116–1119, https://doi.org/10.1126/science.aas8827.
45. Erica Chenoweth and Maria J. Stephan, *Why Civil Resistance Works* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011); Erica Chenoweth, "Questions, Answers, and Some Cautionary Updates Regarding the 3.5% Rule," *Carr Center Discussion Paper*, Harvard Kennedy School, April 2020 ("a descriptive statistic," "a tendency, rather than a law"); Erica Chenoweth, "The Future of Nonviolent Resistance," *Journal of Democracy* 31, no. 3 (2020): pp. 69–84.
46. Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958), chap. V, § 34, p. 247; French trans. Georges Fradier, *Condition de l'homme moderne* (Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 1961; repr. "Agora," 1983), pp. 313–314.

PART II

What We Have Tried

From economic thought to attempts at reconciliation.

CHAPTER 4

A Brief Critical History of Economic Thought

> *"How selfish soever man may be supposed, there are evidently some principles in his nature, which interest him in the fortune of others, and render their happiness necessary to him [...]."*
>
> — Adam Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759)[1]

> *"[A] stationary condition of capital and population implies no stationary state of human improvement."*
>
> — John Stuart Mill, *Principles of Political Economy* (1848)[2]

Every economy rests on an idea of the human being, of wealth, and of the good life. That idea often remains implicit. It nonetheless governs our budgets, our laws, our indicators, and, more quietly, our desires. Before proposing another way of thinking about the economy—conscious balance—we must therefore understand where we come from: what the great schools of economic thought got right, what they have given humanity, and what they have left in the shadows.

This chapter is not a trial. Each school of thought arose to answer a real question of its time: how to feed cities, finance states, escape poverty, avoid mass unemployment, protect liberty against arbitrary power. Yet each has tended to turn an answer that was right for its time into a truth valid everywhere and forever. We will follow one precise thread: the way each school has thought about—or forgotten—**balance**, **measure**, and **consciousness**.

The year 2026 gives this rereading a particular resonance. On March 9, 1776, Adam Smith's *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* was published in London. Two hundred and fifty years later, the anniversary invites us less to celebrate or to condemn the "father of political economy" than to read him again, properly.[3]

4.1 At the Origins: The Household, Measure, and Excess

Aristotle: *Oikonomia* and Chrematistics

The word "economy" comes from the Greek *oikonomia*: the rule (*nomos*) of the household (*oikos*). For Aristotle, in book I of the *Politics*, economics is the art of managing a household—and, by extension, a city—with a view to the good life. The city, he writes, comes into being so that people may live, but it exists so that they may **live well**.[4]

Aristotle then distinguishes two ways of acquiring. The first is natural: it procures what is necessary for life and for the community, and it knows a limit, for the needs of a household are not infinite. The second, which he calls **chrematistics** (from *chrēmata*, riches), aims at the accumulation

of money for its own sake. It has no end point: money becomes both the starting point and the goal of exchange. Aristotle quotes a line of Solon's—"No bound to riches has been fixed for man"—and replies that the art of household management, by contrast, "has a limit."[5] Lending at interest seems to him the form most contrary to nature, because it makes money breed money.[6]

The significance of this distinction deserves to be appreciated. Aristotle condemns neither exchange nor money, both of which he considers useful. He raises a question that modern economics long set aside: **what is wealth for?** He introduces the idea that an economic activity can be healthy as long as it remains ordered to an end beyond itself—the good life—and can become destructive once it becomes its own end. Here, in embryo, is the idea of a **ceiling**. The author of this book restates it as follows: the economy is the art of tending a living household, and our common household is the Earth.

Its blind spots are just as real. The Aristotelian household rests on slavery, which book I justifies, and on the subordination of women. Aristotle's right measure (see chapter 6) is conceived for the free citizens of a small city. The universality of human dignity is foreign to him.

Thomas Aquinas: The Just Price and Usury

In the thirteenth century, Thomas Aquinas takes up Aristotle within a Christian framework. In the *Summa Theologiae*, he holds that to sell a thing for more than it is worth, or to buy it for less, is in itself unjust (our translation).[7] Trade is not condemned: gain becomes legitimate when it is ordered to an honest end—maintaining one's household, helping the needy, supplying one's country—and when it is received as payment for one's labor rather than pursued as an end.[8] Usury, on the other hand, remains unjust: it amounts to selling "what does not exist" and creates an inequality contrary to justice.[9]

The scholastic contribution is lasting: exchange is a moral relationship, value is not simply whatever the strongest party manages to impose, and profit needs a justification. The limits are well known. The notion of the "just price" often served to freeze the hierarchies of a social order, and the prohibition of usury, circumvented by a thousand devices, held back productive credit and fed prejudices with tragic consequences against the Jewish communities to which moneylending was left.

> **FOCUS What We Take from the Origins**
>
> Wealth is a means to the good life, not an end. Economic activity has a natural limit; endless accumulation is its excess. Exchange is a relationship that engages justice. These three ideas—purpose, limit, justice—will run through the whole history we are about to trace, often as conspicuous absences.

4.2 Mercantilism and Physiocracy: The Wealth of the State, Then the Wealth of the Land

Mercantilism: Power Through the Balance of Trade

From the sixteenth to the eighteenth century, the modern states of Europe adopted a practical doctrine more than a theory: mercantilism. For its proponents—the English merchant Thomas Mun, whose *England's Treasure by Forraign Trade* appeared in 1664, or Jean-Baptiste Colbert, Louis XIV's controller-general of finances from 1665—a nation's wealth is measured by its stock of precious metals. It must therefore export more than it imports, protect its domestic manufactures, and conquer outlets for its goods.[10]

Mercantilism helped build infrastructure, manufactures, and administrations. It also understood very early that the economy is a matter of power. But it rests on a zero-sum view: what one party gains, the other loses. The "balance" here is a relation of force, not a shared balance. And this logic was inseparable from colonial expansion and the Atlantic slave trade.

Physiocracy: The First Economic "Circuit"

In reaction, a group of French thinkers gathered around François Quesnay, physician to Louis XV, asserted that the only true source of wealth is the land. Agriculture alone, they argued, yields a "net product," a surplus over what has been consumed in producing it. In 1758, Quesnay had his *Tableau économique* printed at Versailles; it depicts the circulation of wealth among the class of cultivators, the class of proprietors, and the so-called "sterile" class of artisans and merchants.[11]

The contribution is considerable. Quesnay, as a physician, conceives of the economy as an **organism** through which flows circulate, like blood. He invents the circuit representation, the distant ancestor of national accounting and input-output tables. And he reminds us that all production depends, in the end, on the fertility of the soil—an intuition that ecological economics would rediscover two centuries later (see section 4.9). The physiocrats are also associated with the watchword *laissez faire, laissez passer*, attributed to Vincent de Gournay, a merchant who became an intendant of commerce and who pleaded for the removal of obstacles to the grain trade.[12]

The blind spot is twofold. The thesis that industry and commerce are "sterile" would soon be refuted by the Industrial Revolution. And the physiocrats' "natural" order is a fixed order, willed by Providence, which the sovereign need only allow to unfold: a balance given in advance, not a balance to be built.

4.3 Adam Smith: What He Really Said

Two Books, One Body of Work

Adam Smith (1723–1790) was not primarily an economist. A professor of moral philosophy at the University of Glasgow, he published *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* in 1759 and kept revising it until its sixth edition in 1790, the year of his death. Seventeen years after that first book came *The Wealth of Nations* (1776). In the nineteenth century, German commentators thought they saw a contradiction between the two: a Smith of sympathy and another of self-interest. They spoke of

"the Adam Smith problem." Contemporary scholarship, since the critical Glasgow Edition (1976), sees instead a single body of work: a theory of life in society, of which the market is only one part.[13]

The Theory of Moral Sentiments opens with the sentence we have placed as an epigraph: however selfish we may suppose them to be, human beings carry within them principles that make them take an interest in the fortune of others. The heart of the book is **sympathy**—what we would today call empathy: the capacity to put ourselves, through imagination, in another's place. To judge our own actions, we learn to look at them through the eyes of an **impartial spectator**, an inner witness neither indulgent nor hostile. Smith also calls it "reason, principle, conscience, the inhabitant of the breast, the man within, the great judge and arbiter of our conduct."[14] It is not the soft power of humanity, he adds, nor the feeble spark of benevolence, that can counteract self-love: it is this inner judge.[15]

For Equiconscism, this point is crucial. The founder of modern political economy never imagined that the market could function without conscience. He assumed people endowed with a moral conscience, shaped by institutions, customs, and relationships. Consciousness as a regulator is not an idea foreign to the economic tradition: it is one of its forgotten roots.

The Division of Labor and Enlightened Self-Interest

The Wealth of Nations opens with the division of labor, illustrated by the famous pin factory in which ten specialized workers make some 48,000 pins a day—each of them hundreds, even thousands, of times more than a craftsman working alone. Smith shows there that a nation's wealth lies not in its gold, as the mercantilists believed, but in **productive labor** and in the extent of exchange. His most quoted sentence reads: "It is not from the benevolence of the butcher, the brewer, or the baker that we expect our dinner, but from their regard to their own interest."[16]

The contribution is immense and must not be minimized. Smith shows that people who do not know one another can cooperate through exchange, that competition can discipline privilege, and that the economic freedom of ordinary people—to choose their trade, to sell their labor, to settle where they wish—is a form of justice against guilds and state-protected monopolies. The revolution in prosperity of the two centuries that followed belongs, in part, to this legacy.

The "Invisible Hand": Three Occurrences, One Misreading

The expression "invisible hand" appears **only once** in *The Wealth of Nations*. In book IV, chapter II, paragraph 9, Smith describes a merchant who prefers to invest in the industry of his own country for the sake of security and who, in seeking only his own gain, is "led by an invisible hand to promote an end which was no part of his intention."[17] The context is a discussion of import restrictions, not a general theory of the self-regulating market.

The expression appears one other time, in *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (IV.1.10): the rich, in spite of their "natural selfishness and rapacity," are "led by an invisible hand to make nearly the same distribution of the necessaries of life, which would have been made, had the earth been divided into equal portions among all its inhabitants."[18] A third, earlier occurrence is found in a youthful essay published after his death, "The History of Astronomy," where Smith pokes fun at the "invisible hand of Jupiter" that ancient peoples invoked to explain irregular phenomena.[19]

Three occurrences in all, then, in a body of work running to more than a thousand pages. Only in the twentieth century did the phrase become the symbol of a market that would balance itself, without morality and without institutions. That is a misreading—or at the very least a considerable amplification.

The same Smith writes, after all, that people of the same trade seldom meet together, even for merriment and diversion, without the conversation ending in a conspiracy against the public or in some contrivance to raise prices.[20] In book V, he worries about the stupefaction of the worker whose whole life is spent performing a few simple operations, and he recommends public education as a remedy.[21] He distrusts merchants who claim to act for the public good. He defends impartial justice, public goods financed by taxation, and genuine competition against collusion. The historical Smith is neither the apostle of a market without rules nor a theorist of planning: he is a philosopher of the **balance between self-interest and sympathy**, framed by justice.

> *"[...] it is no longer possible to rely solely on the 'invisible hand' of the market."*
>
> — Leo XIV, *Magnifica Humanitas*, no. 163 (2026)[22]

What Smith Could Not See

Smith's blind spots belong to his era more than to his thought. He wrote before large-scale industry, before giant joint-stock companies—which, incidentally, he considered inefficient—before globalized finance, and before any awareness of ecological limits. He conceives of no ecological limits to growth, which he believes capable of benefiting the poorest in the long run. He could not imagine that a company might become more powerful than most states, or that a discreet alliance between political power and the holders of capital might neutralize competition. This is precisely what Ravi Chaudhry emphasizes in his op-ed published by *Fortune* for the 250th anniversary, whose title says it all: "Our economy has been living in an Adam Smith world since 1776. Something different is coming" (see chapter 5).[23]

To reread Smith in 2026, then, is to give him back both his hands: the invisible hand of exchange and the visible hand of conscience—that of the impartial spectator. This is precisely what Equiconscism does when it places **the hand that holds the pendulum** at the center of its emblem (see chapter 7).

4.4 Classical Economists and Their Critics: Ricardo, Malthus, Mill, Marx

David Ricardo (*On the Principles of Political Economy and Taxation*, 1817) gave economics its deductive rigor. His theory of **comparative advantage**—the example of English cloth and Portuguese wine—shows that two countries gain by specializing and trading, even if one is more productive at everything.[24] It is one of the most robust and fruitful results of the discipline. Its blind spot is the assumption of immobile capital and of social and ecological costs left out of the calculation: specialization can also make entire regions dependent and vulnerable.

Thomas Robert Malthus (*An Essay on the Principle of Population*, 1798) introduced the question of **limits**: population, he argued, tends to grow faster than the means of subsistence. His predictions were refuted by gains in agricultural productivity and by the demographic transition, and his con-

clusions against relief for the poor are morally unacceptable. Yet he raised a question that ecological economics would take up on other foundations: is indefinite material growth possible in a finite world?[25]

John Stuart Mill and the "Stationary State"

John Stuart Mill occupies a singular place in this history. In his *Principles of Political Economy* (1848), book IV, chapter VI, "Of the Stationary State," he contemplates the moment when the growth of capital and population will come to a halt. Unlike most of his contemporaries, he is not alarmed by it. He confesses that he is not charmed by an ideal of life made of a perpetual struggle to get on—"the trampling, crushing, elbowing, and treading on each other's heels." He pleads for humanity to choose the stationary state long before necessity forces it to, and he stresses that this state implies no halt to human improvement: there would be as much room as ever for culture, for moral and social progress, for the **art of living**. He adds that a world with no room left for solitude amid natural beauty, nor for wild flowers, would be an impoverished world.[26]

Mill is the first major economist to separate **progress** from **growth**. In this he anticipates Keynes, Daly, and today's debates (see section 4.9). His limitation, from the standpoint of Equiconscism, lies in the very word *state*: stability is still conceived as a point of arrival, a plateau, not as a living regulation. We take up his intuition—not to confuse having more with living better—and transform it into a process.

Karl Marx: The Most Powerful Critique, the Costliest Remedy

In *Capital* (volume I, 1867), Karl Marx (1818–1883) delivered the most systematic critique of industrial capitalism. Three contributions remain indispensable. First, **alienation**, analyzed in the *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*: workers are dispossessed of the product of their labor, of the meaning of their activity, and of their bond with others. Second, **commodity fetishism**: relations between people take on the appearance of relations between things, so that we forget the human labor and the nature behind the price. Finally, the dynamic of capital **accumulation**, which drives concentration, crises, and endless expansion.[27] Marx also documented working-class conditions with precision, drawing on the reports of the English factory inspectors.

The historical record of the planned economies that claimed his mantle is nonetheless grim. The Soviet Union and the regimes that imitated it suppressed political freedoms, concentrated power in a party-state, produced chronic shortages—which the Hungarian economist János Kornai analyzed as a systemic feature of these economies—and suffered mass famines, in Ukraine in 1932–1933 and in China in 1959–1961. Their ecological record was disastrous, as the drying up of the Aral Sea illustrates.[28] The remedy had reproduced, in worse form, the defect it claimed to cure: the concentration of power and the neglect of the concrete person.

The blind spot shared by Marx and his adversaries is striking: all of them share **productivism**, faith in the growth of the productive forces. And both camps look for regulation at the macro level —the market or the plan—while neglecting the consciousness of persons and the life of intermediate organizations.

4.5 The Marginalist Revolution and the Economists' "Equilibrium"

In the early 1870s, three authors, working independently, shifted the focus of economics: William Stanley Jevons (*The Theory of Political Economy*, 1871), Carl Menger (*Principles of Economics*, 1871), and Léon Walras (*Éléments d'économie politique pure* [Elements of pure economics], 1874). Value no longer comes from the labor embodied in a good but from its **marginal utility**: the satisfaction provided by the last unit consumed. A glass of water in the desert is worth more than a diamond; the tenth glass, much less than the first.[29]

Walras, who taught at the Academy—later the University—of Lausanne from 1870 to 1892, then built the first model of **general equilibrium**: a system of equations in which all markets—for goods, labor, and capital—adjust simultaneously, through a kind of "groping" (*tâtonnement*), until they reach a set of prices at which supply equals demand everywhere. His successor at Lausanne, Vilfredo Pareto, defined the optimum that bears his name: a situation in which no one can be made better off without making at least one other person worse off. In 1954, Kenneth Arrow and Gérard Debreu proved mathematically, under precise assumptions, that such an equilibrium exists.[30] In parallel, John Nash defined in 1950 the equilibrium that bears his name: a situation in which no player has an interest in unilaterally changing strategy, given the strategies of the others.[31]

The contribution of this tradition is real: a rigorous language, tools of measurement, an understanding of the interdependence of markets, powerful instruments for evaluating policies. It is also worth recalling that Walras himself was a social reformer who favored the state's buying back of land, and that Jevons, as early as 1865, worried about the exhaustion of British coal and observed that gains in efficiency can increase the total consumption of a resource instead of reducing it—what is known today as the "Jevons paradox."[32]

Equilibrium and Balance: Two Notions Not to Be Confused

The word *equilibrium* thus lies at the heart of modern economics. But it does not designate what Equiconscism calls **conscious balance**.

FOCUS **The Economists' Equilibrium and Conscious Balance**

In French a single word, *équilibre*, covers two very different realities; English helpfully separates them. The table compares them point by point.

Point of Comparison	General Equilibrium (Walras, Arrow-Debreu) or Nash Equilibrium	Conscious Balance
Nature	A **state**: a point at which forces cancel each other out	A **process**: a regulated oscillation within a corridor
Time	Static, or a comparison of states; the path matters little	Dynamic; the path, the rhythms, and the cycles matter
Regulator	Mechanical: prices, or strategic calculation	Conscious: people who perceive, listen, discern, and adjust
Actors	Representative agents with given preferences	Situated people and organizations with differentiated needs
Criterion	Efficiency (Pareto optimum); strategic stability	Right measure between floors and ceilings, in all three dimensions
What Lies Outside the Frame	Initial distribution, nature, future generations, meaning	Nothing, in principle: widening the gaze includes those absent

The difference is not a technical detail. A Nash equilibrium can be collectively disastrous: the "prisoner's dilemma" shows that perfectly rational actors can lock themselves into a situation in which everyone loses. A Pareto optimum can coexist with extreme destitution if the initial distribution is highly unequal. And general equilibrium says nothing about the biosphere's capacity to sustain the activity it describes. The economists' equilibrium is that of motionless scales; conscious balance is that of **a hand holding a pendulum in motion**.

4.6 Keynes and the Regulating State

The crash of 1929 and the mass unemployment of the 1930s shook confidence in self-regulation. In 1936, John Maynard Keynes published *The General Theory of Employment, Interest and Money*. In it, he shows that an economy can remain durably stuck in an **underemployment equilibrium**: when anxious households and firms save and invest less, demand collapses, and nothing guarantees a spontaneous return to full employment. The state must then support demand through public spending, monetary policy, and automatic stabilizers.[33] As early as 1923, Keynes had mocked the patience of economists who promise a return to equilibrium "in the long run": "In the long run," he wrote, "we are all dead."[34]

Keynes's contribution is decisive: he makes the economy a **dynamic** system, subject to expectations, radical uncertainty, and "animal spirits"; he shows that an equilibrium can be a bad one, and that conscious regulation is sometimes necessary. In 1930, in a short essay, "Economic Possibilities for our Grandchildren," he even predicted that a century later the economic problem would be on its way to being solved and that humanity could devote itself to the art of living, with a working week of some fifteen hours.[35] In this he joined Mill.

In July 1944, the Bretton Woods conference, in which Keynes took part, established a stable international monetary order—fixed but adjustable exchange rates, capital controls—as well as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. There followed, in Western countries, what Jean Fourastié would call the ***Trente Glorieuses*** (France's "thirty glorious years" of postwar growth, 1946–1975): strong growth, full employment, the welfare state, and narrowing inequalities.[36]

The blind spots of this compromise become apparent in hindsight. The prosperity of the *Trente Glorieuses* rested on cheap fossil energy and on a material growth that no one questioned; GDP, forged in the 1930s and 1940s to steer the war effort and reconstruction, became the sole compass of policy. Regulation was conceived **from the top down**, at the level of the central state, with a sometimes excessive confidence in the fine-tuning of the economy. The stagflation of the 1970s and the end of the dollar's convertibility into gold, on August 15, 1971, marked the end of this age.

4.7 Hayek, Friedman, and the Neoliberal Turn

In 1944, Friedrich Hayek published *The Road to Serfdom*, which warns against planning: by concentrating economic decisions, it also concentrates political power. In a 1945 article, "The Use of Knowledge in Society," he formulated a deeper argument: the knowledge useful to the economy is **dispersed** among millions of people, local, often tacit; no planner can gather it, and prices serve as a system of telecommunications that transmits it.[37] In April 1947, at Mont Pèlerin, above Vevey on Lake Geneva, Hayek brought together the founders of the Mont Pelerin Society, the intellectual laboratory of the liberal revival.

Milton Friedman carried this fight forward. A monetarist and Nobel laureate in 1976, he defended the link between economic freedom and political freedom in *Capitalism and Freedom* (1962). On September 13, 1970, the *New York Times Magazine* published his article "The Social Responsibility of Business Is to Increase Its Profits." In it, he argues that the corporate executive is the employee of the shareholders, that spending their money on social causes amounts to levying a tax without a mandate, and that there is one and only one social responsibility of business: to use its resources to increase its profits "so long as it stays within the rules of the game"—that is, open and free competition, without deception or fraud.[38] Complemented in 1976 by agency theory (Jensen and Meckling), this doctrine inspired the "shareholder value" of the decades that followed.[39]

The 1980s turned these ideas into policy: disinflation, privatization, financial deregulation, lower taxes on capital. In 1989, the economist John Williamson summarized in ten points the reforms that the Washington institutions were recommending to Latin American countries—fiscal discipline, liberalization of trade and capital, privatization, deregulation—which he called the **Washington Consensus**.[40] **Financialization** also got under way: the growing role of financial motives, financial markets, financial actors, and financial institutions in the operation of economies.[41]

We must acknowledge what this school of thought got right. Hayek understood better than anyone that knowledge is distributed and that centralized systems fail through an excess of presumption: this is an argument that Equiconscism makes its own in favor of the micro and meso levels, of subsidiarity, and of distributed intelligence—the octopus of our emblem. Friedman pointed out that a company has no democratic legitimacy to levy taxes as it pleases, and that social responsibility can become an alibi. Liberalization, together with the globalization of trade, helped lift hundreds of millions of people out of extreme poverty, especially in Asia.

The blind spots are nevertheless major. The 1970 doctrine reduces the company to a single variable to be **maximized**: the exact opposite of right measure. It assumes that "the rules of the game" are enough to internalize damage, whereas ecological and social costs remain largely unpriced—and large companies themselves help write those rules. Financialization has shortened decision horizons, increased inequality in many countries, and produced repeated crises, up to and including that of 2008. Finally, freedom is conceived here as the absence of constraint, rarely as responsibility embraced toward others and toward the living world. It is this doctrine that the Business Roundtable itself publicly amended in 2019 (see chapter 5).

4.8 The Middle Ways: Markets, Rules, and Solidarity

Between the market left to itself and the plan imposed from above, several traditions have sought paths of balance. They are less spectacular in the textbooks; they are often closer to what prosperous and peaceful societies actually live.

Ordoliberalism and the Social Market Economy

In the 1930s and 1940s, around Walter Eucken and the jurist Franz Böhm, the Freiburg School (Freiburg im Breisgau) developed **ordoliberalism**: the competitive market is the best coordinator, but it does not hold together on its own. The state must establish and guarantee an **order**—genuine competition against cartels and monopolies, monetary stability, property linked to liability, stable rules.[42] In 1946–1947, Alfred Müller-Armack coined the expression **social market economy**, which Ludwig Erhard put into practice in West Germany from the currency reform of June 1948 onward. The German economist Wilhelm Röpke, in exile in Geneva, added an anthropological dimension: the market presupposes living communities, customs, and a right measure that it does not produce by itself.[43]

The contribution is fundamental: thinking about the market **and** its framework, freedom **and** responsibility. The blind spot: a model that is chiefly macro-institutional, designed for a growing industrial economy, and largely blind, at the outset, to ecological limits.

The Swiss Model: A Negotiated Balance

Switzerland offers a singular example of a middle way—not as a perfect model, but as a long-standing practice of negotiated balance. Four elements combine.

Labor peace. In 1937, in the aftermath of the Great Depression and in the face of external threats, the employers' association of the machine and metal industry and the industry's trade unions concluded an agreement rather than leaving the state to arbitrate their conflicts: a joint mechanism would henceforth settle disputes, and the parties committed themselves to labor peace—that is, to renouncing strikes and lockouts.[44] Renewed ever since, this approach has made collective labor agreements a pillar of Swiss social partnership; the Federal Constitution provides that labor disputes are to be settled, as far as possible, through negotiation or mediation (Art. 28).

Subsidiarity, enshrined in Article 5a of the Constitution since 2008: "The principle of subsidiarity must be observed in the allocation and performance of state tasks." The Confederation thus takes on only those tasks that exceed the capacity of the cantons or that require uniform regulation (Art. 43a), and decisions are made as close as possible to citizens—municipality, canton, Confederation.[45]

Direct democracy: the optional referendum (1874) and the popular initiative (1891). It obliges elites to persuade and turns every popular vote into a collective exercise in discernment.

Cooperatives, finally, which hold a remarkable place in the economy: Migros, founded in 1925 by Gottlieb Duttweiler and turned into cooperatives in 1941; Coop, heir to the Union suisse des sociétés de consommation (Union of Swiss Consumer Societies), founded in 1890; the Raiffeisen banks, whose first lasting Swiss credit cooperative was founded in 1899 in Bichelsee, in the canton of Thurgau; and la Mobilière (Swiss Mobiliar), founded in 1826 and still a cooperative.[46] They belong to their members, not to shareholders, which lengthens decision horizons and ties the economy to its territory (see chapter 9).

This model has its limits and its shadows: slow decision-making; the place long denied to women, who were granted the federal vote only in 1971; dependence on a financial center that long profited from banking secrecy; and a high imported ecological footprint. But it shows that lasting prosperity can arise from a **negotiated and regularly readjusted balance** among economic freedom, social partnership, decision-making close to those concerned, and citizen participation.

The Nordic Model and the Social and Solidarity Economy

Building on historic agreements between employers and unions—in Sweden, the Saltsjöbaden Agreement of 1938—the Nordic countries have constructed an original combination of openness to world trade, strong collective bargaining, a universal welfare state, and high levels of trust.[47] At the same time, the **social and solidarity economy**—cooperatives, mutual societies, associations, foundations—extends the legacy of the Rochdale Equitable Pioneers (1844) and of Charles Gide. France gave it a legal framework in 2014.[48] It demonstrates, at the meso level, that one can run an enterprise without making profit an end in itself.

Catholic Social Teaching

On May 15, 1891, Leo XIII published the encyclical *Rerum novarum*, on the condition of workers. In it he affirms the dignity of labor, the right to a just wage, the legitimacy of workers' associations, and private property bound to a social function, and he proposes cooperation among the components of society as an alternative to class struggle.[49] In 1931, *Quadragesimo anno* formulated the principle of subsidiarity. On a theological foundation of its own, this tradition sheds light on criteria that Equiconscism shares on a nonconfessional foundation: the person as an end, never as a means, and a justice that concerns not only redistribution but, in the words of *Magnifica Humanitas*, "every phase of economic activity."[50] This is a **convergence of criteria**, not an endorsement (see chapters 7 and 12).

4.9 The Great Critiques of the Twentieth Century

From the mid-twentieth century onward, a series of thinkers questioned the very foundations of mainstream economics. Each sheds light on a blind spot; together, they prepare the ground for conscious balance.

Karl Polanyi published *The Great Transformation* in 1944. He shows that throughout human history the economy has almost always been **embedded** in society—in kinship, religion, and politics. In the nineteenth century, the idea of a self-regulating market sought to treat as commodities three realities that were not produced to be sold: labor (that is, people), land (that is, nature), and money. These "fictitious commodities" cannot be handed over to the market alone without destroying society, which then reacts with a protective countermovement—sometimes democratic, sometimes authoritarian.[51] Equiconscism retains this lesson: the economy is a part of society and of the living world, never the reverse.

E. F. Schumacher, in *Small Is Beautiful* (1973), proposes a "Buddhist economics": where the modern economist seeks to maximize consumption, the aim would be to obtain the greatest well-being with the lowest possible consumption, and to see work as a place where the person develops.[52] He argues for technologies on a human scale. **Nicholas Georgescu-Roegen** (*The Entropy Law and the Economic Process*, 1971) reminds us that all economic activity transforms low-entropy matter and energy into high-entropy waste: the economy is not a closed circuit but a flow passing through a finite biosphere.[53] A year later, the report to the Club of Rome *The Limits to Growth* (Meadows et al., 1972) modeled the interactions among population, production, resources, and pollution and showed that exponential growth in a finite world leads, absent adjustment, to overshoot and then collapse.[54]

Herman Daly, a student of Georgescu-Roegen, took up Mill's intuition and theorized a **steady-state economy** (*Steady-State Economics*, 1977): an economy in which the flow of matter and energy remains compatible with the regenerative and absorptive capacity of ecosystems, while quality, knowledge, and culture can continue to develop.[55] In his wake, the **degrowth** movement—Serge Latouche in France and, more recently, Giorgos Kallis and Jason Hickel—argues for a planned and equitable reduction of material production in rich countries.[56]

Amartya Sen, Nobel laureate in 1998, shifts the question from having to **being able to act**: development is measured by "capabilities," that is, the real freedoms people have to lead the lives they have reason to value (*Development as Freedom*, 1999).[57] This is one of the foundations of **differentiated equity**: different people need different resources to achieve the same freedoms. **Elinor Ostrom**, the first woman to receive the Nobel Prize in economics (2009), demonstrates in *Governing the Commons* (1990) that communities can manage shared resources sustainably without privatizing or nationalizing them, provided they equip themselves with suitable rules, monitoring mechanisms and graduated sanctions, and venues for collective decision-making. Among her examples is the alpine pasture of Törbel, in the Valais, managed in common for centuries.[58] She thereby refutes the "tragedy of the commons" proclaimed by Garrett Hardin in 1968[59] and gives the **meso level** its full standing.

Finally, **behavioral economics** dismantles *homo economicus*. After Herbert Simon and his "bounded rationality," Daniel Kahneman and Amos Tversky (prospect theory, 1979; Kahneman's Nobel in 2002) and then Richard Thaler (Nobel in 2017) showed that our decisions are subject to systematic biases—loss aversion, present bias, framing effects.[60] The contribution is valuable, but it is often used to "nudge" behavior rather than to broaden people's awareness.

Closer to our own day, the economist Markus Brunnermeier (*The Resilient Society*, 2021), whose image of the reed and the oak was evoked in chapter 1, distinguishes **resilience** from robustness. He also stresses that the capacity to bounce back is unequally distributed—those who cannot afford a single mistake take no risks at all.[61] We see this as a confirmation: living stability is a capacity for adjustment, not rigidity.

These critiques have their own limits. Polanyi describes more than he equips. The Club of Rome's models were attacked—often unfairly—for their projections. Degrowth, when it becomes doctrinaire, can come across as guilt-inducing, neglect the needs of poor countries, and underestimate the power of innovation. It is here that the author of this book locates the founding intuition of Equiconscism. On February 14, 2025, he noted: "in the business world, the emphasis for success is placed on growth strategies and theories. The counterpart in environmentalist circles is degrowth. For my part, I think that for lasting and healthy success, we must increasingly find the right balances, or conscious balances."[62] The first name considered was, in fact, *Equilonomy*; as early as February 2025 it gave way to *Équiconscisme* (Equiconscism), a name that places consciousness, and not only balance, at the heart of the theory (see chapter 7). The question is not "grow or degrow?" but rather: **what do we want to see grow**—cooperation, consciousness, resilience, justice, quality—**and what must we make shrink**—overconsumption, extractivism, greed, inequality?

4.10 A Critical Assessment: What They All Missed

The following table summarizes, necessarily in broad strokes, what each school of thought contributed, what it left in the shadows, how it conceived of balance, and the level at which it situates action.

School of Thought	Major Contributions	Blind Spots	View of Balance	Level of Action
Aristotle, scholasticism	Purpose of wealth; limit; justice in exchange	Slavery, fixed hierarchies; brake on credit	Ethical mean, conceived for an elite	Micro (household) and city
Mercantilism	Role of the state; infrastructure; link between economy and power	Zero-sum game; colonialism	Balance of trade as a relation of force	Macro (state)
Physiocracy	Economic circuit; primacy of the land; freedom of trade	Industry deemed "sterile"; fixed order	Natural order given in advance	Macro
Adam Smith	Division of labor; exchange; sympathy and the impartial spectator	Inexhaustible nature; large firms and finance not foreseen	Spontaneous harmony framed by justice and morality	Micro and macro, linked by customs

School of Thought	Major Contributions	Blind Spots	View of Balance	Level of Action
Classical economists (Ricardo, Malthus, Mill)	Comparative advantage; limits; progress without growth (Mill)	Social and ecological costs left out of the calculation; Malthusianism	Stationary state (Mill), still conceived as a state	Macro
Marx and planned economies	Alienation; fetishism; critique of accumulation	Concentration of power; shortages; productivism; ecological disasters	Contradictions overcome by history	Macro (class, state)
Neoclassical economists	Rigor; marginal utility; interdependence of markets	Distribution, nature, time, and meaning outside the model	Static general equilibrium; Pareto optimum; Nash	Micro (agent) aggregated into macro
Keynes	Instability; uncertainty; demand management; "art of living"	Productivism; GDP as sole compass; top-down steering	Multiple equilibria, some of them bad; regulation by the state	Macro
Hayek, Friedman, neoliberalism	Dispersed knowledge; distrust of concentrated power; freedom	Maximization of a single variable; externalities; financialization; inequality	Spontaneous market order	Micro (individual, company) and macro rules
Ordoliberalism, Swiss model, Nordic model	Market and framework; social partnership; subsidiarity; cooperatives	Material growth little questioned; slowness; imported footprint	Negotiated and institutionalized balance	Meso and macro
Catholic social teaching	Dignity; common good; subsidiarity and solidarity	Confessional foundation; little operationalization	Justice and measure, without an economic model of its own	All levels
Polanyi, ecological economics, degrowth	Embeddedness; entropy; planetary boundaries; steady state	Few tools for action; risk of guilt-inducing discourse	Stability of flows; reduction	Mainly macro
Sen, Ostrom, behavioral economics	Capabilities; commons; cognitive biases	Slow diffusion; *nudge* without consciousness	Adaptive institutions (Ostrom)	Micro and meso

Three Shared Gaps

At the end of this survey, three gaps appear. They are not reproaches addressed to thinkers who answered the questions of their own time, but tasks for ours.

The first gap: conscious and differentiated dynamics. Nearly all these schools of thought conceived of balance as a **state**—a point of equilibrium, an optimum, a natural order, a stationary state—or sacrificed it to the maximization of a single variable: gold, the net product, output, utility, growth, profit. Keynes and Ostrom are the exceptions, in that they conceived of regulations and institutions that learn. But no school has made balance a **process of continuous adjustment**, differentiated according to needs, contexts, and moments, and regulated by people who see what they are doing. The pendulum tells the time only because it moves.

The second gap: linking the levels. The great doctrines chose their level: the rational individual or the planning state, the market or the plan, the company or the nation. The middle ways—Swiss subsidiarity, Ostrom's commons, the social economy—rediscovered the meso level, but without always linking it explicitly to the person on one side and to planetary boundaries on the other. Yet

today's imbalances cut across all levels at once: a person's exhaustion, a team's loss of meaning, the fragility of a supply chain, and climate disruption are interconnected manifestations of one and the same imbalance.

The third gap: consciousness as a regulator. Smith placed an impartial spectator at the heart of moral life; the economics that claimed his legacy forgot it. Most schools sought regulation in a mechanism—prices, the plan, the rule, the indicator—and treated consciousness as a private matter. The behavioral sciences have shown that our decisions are not purely rational; they have more rarely sought to widen our gaze. This is the intuition of the author of this book: the economy is the collective expression of our level of consciousness. When consciousness fragments, the economy becomes predatory; when it widens, the economy can become regenerative.

Equiconscism does not claim to replace these legacies. It takes from Aristotle purpose and limit; from Smith sympathy and the impartial spectator; from Mill the idea of progress without excess; from Keynes regulation; from Hayek distributed intelligence; from Switzerland negotiated balance and subsidiarity; from Polanyi embeddedness; from Daly and the ecologists limits; from Sen differentiated equity; and from Ostrom the governance of the commons. To these it adds what was missing to link them together: **a consciousness that holds the pendulum**.

In the twentieth century and the early twenty-first, numerous initiatives have, moreover, tried to reconcile profit, people, and the planet: corporate social responsibility, the Triple Bottom Line, Hazel Henderson's "win-win world," shared value, the Doughnut, Ravi Chaudhry's Peopleism. These attempts at reconciliation are the subject of the next chapter.

In Brief

- Economics was born as the art of managing a household with a view to the good life; Aristotle already distinguished *oikonomia*, which knows a limit, from chrematistics, endless accumulation.
- Adam Smith is not the prophet of a market without morality: his *Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759) grounds social life in sympathy and the impartial spectator, and the "invisible hand" appears only once in *The Wealth of Nations* (1776).
- As early as 1848, Mill envisioned a desirable stationary state with no halt to human improvement; in 1930, Keynes dreamed of a time devoted to the art of living.
- The economists' "equilibrium" (Walras, Arrow-Debreu, Nash) is a static state; conscious balance is a dynamic, regulated, and differentiated process.
- Marx delivered a powerful critique of alienation, but the planned economies concentrated power and failed; the Friedman doctrine (1970) reduced the company to profit maximization.
- The middle ways—the social market economy, the Swiss model (the labor peace of 1937, subsidiarity, direct democracy, cooperatives), the Nordic model, the social economy, Catholic social teaching—show how fruitful negotiated balance can be.
- To varying degrees, every school of thought missed conscious and differentiated dynamics, the linking of the micro, meso, and macro levels, and consciousness as a regulator: this is what Equiconscism sets out to contribute.

Notes

1. Adam Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* [1759], I.i.1.1. Reference edition: D. D. Raphael and A. L. Macfie (eds.), Oxford: Clarendon Press (Glasgow Edition), 1976.
2. John Stuart Mill, *Principles of Political Economy* [1848], book IV, chap. VI, "Of the Stationary State." Ed. W. J. Ashley (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1909).
3. Adam Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* (London: W. Strahan and T. Cadell, 1776; published March 9, 1776). Reference edition: R. H. Campbell, A. S. Skinner, and W. B. Todd (eds.), Oxford: Clarendon Press (Glasgow Edition), 1976. References follow the numbering of this edition (book, chapter, paragraph).
4. Aristotle, *Politics*, I, 2, 1252b29–30. French trans.: Pierre Pellegrin (Paris: GF-Flammarion, 1990).
5. Aristotle, *Politics*, I, 8, 1256b32–34 (Solon's line) and I, 9, 1257b30–1258a1 (the limit of household management). Trans. B. Jowett.
6. Aristotle, *Politics*, I, 10, 1258b2–8.
7. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, IIa-IIae, q. 77, a. 1.
8. Ibid., q. 77, a. 4.
9. Ibid., q. 78, a. 1 (trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province).
10. Thomas Mun, *England's Treasure by Forraign Trade* (London: Thomas Clark, 1664; posthumous). Colbert was appointed controller-general of finances in 1665. The expression "mercantile system" is Adam Smith's (*Wealth of Nations*, book IV).
11. François Quesnay, *Tableau économique*, Versailles, 1758 (first version, followed by the editions of 1759). Critical edition: François Quesnay, *Œuvres économiques complètes et autres textes*, ed. C. Théré, L. Charles, and J.-C. Perrot (Paris: INED, 2005).
12. The attribution of the maxim to Gournay has been traditional since the eighteenth century; see Anne-Robert-Jacques Turgot, *Éloge de Vincent de Gournay* (1759). Its exact wording and origin remain disputed.
13. On "Das Adam Smith Problem," see D. D. Raphael and A. L. Macfie's introduction to the Glasgow Edition of *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1976).
14. Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, III.3.4.
15. Ibid., III.3.4: "It is not the soft power of humanity, it is not that feeble spark of benevolence which Nature has lighted up in the human heart, that is thus capable of counteracting the strongest impulses of self-love."
16. Smith, *Wealth of Nations*, I.ii.2. The pin factory: I.i.3.
17. Ibid., IV.ii.9.
18. Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, IV.1.10.
19. Adam Smith, "The History of Astronomy," III.2, in *Essays on Philosophical Subjects* (London: Cadell & Davies, 1795); ed. W. P. D. Wightman and J. C. Bryce, Oxford: Clarendon Press (Glasgow Edition), 1980.
20. Smith, *Wealth of Nations*, I.x.c.27.
21. Ibid., V.i.f.50.
22. Leo XIV, Encyclical Letter *Magnifica Humanitas* (May 15, 2026), no. 163, accessed October 16, 2026, https://www.vatican.va/content/leo-xiv/en/encyclicals/documents/20260515-magnifica-humanitas.html.
23. Ravi Chaudhry, "Our economy has been living in an Adam Smith world since 1776. Something different is coming," *Fortune*, March 22, 2026, https://fortune.com/2026/03/22/economy-adam-smith-250th-anniversary-wealth-of-nations-outlook-ai/.
24. David Ricardo, *On the Principles of Political Economy and Taxation* (London: John Murray, 1817), chap. VII.
25. [Thomas Robert Malthus], *An Essay on the Principle of Population* (London: J. Johnson, 1798; published anonymously).
26. Mill, *Principles of Political Economy*, book IV, chap. VI (paraphrase, except for the quoted phrase).
27. Karl Marx, *Das Kapital*, vol. I (Hamburg: Otto Meissner, 1867), chap. 1, § 4 (commodity fetishism); *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844* (published in 1932).
28. János Kornai, *Economics of Shortage* (Amsterdam: North-Holland, 1980). On the Aral Sea: Philip Micklin, "The Aral Sea Disaster," *Annual Review of Earth and Planetary Sciences* 35 (2007): pp. 47–72.
29. William Stanley Jevons, *The Theory of Political Economy* (London: Macmillan, 1871); Carl Menger, *Grundsätze der Volkswirtschaftslehre* (Vienna: Braumüller, 1871); Léon Walras, *Éléments d'économie politique pure* (Lausanne: Corbaz, 1874–1877).
30. Vilfredo Pareto, *Manuel d'économie politique* (Paris: Giard et Brière, 1909); Kenneth J. Arrow and Gérard Debreu, "Existence of an Equilibrium for a Competitive Economy," *Econometrica* 22, no. 3 (1954): pp. 265–290.
31. John F. Nash, "Equilibrium Points in n-Person Games," *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 36, no. 1 (1950): pp. 48–49.
32. William Stanley Jevons, *The Coal Question* (London: Macmillan, 1865), chap. VII; Léon Walras, *Études d'économie sociale* (Lausanne: Rouge, 1896).
33. John Maynard Keynes, *The General Theory of Employment, Interest and Money* (London: Macmillan, 1936).
34. John Maynard Keynes, *A Tract on Monetary Reform* (London: Macmillan, 1923), chap. 3.
35. John Maynard Keynes, "Economic Possibilities for our Grandchildren" (1930), reprinted in *Essays in Persuasion* (London: Macmillan, 1931).
36. United Nations Monetary and Financial Conference, Bretton Woods, July 1–22, 1944; Jean Fourastié, *Les Trente Glorieuses ou la révolution invisible de 1946 à 1975* (Paris: Fayard, 1979).

37. Friedrich A. Hayek, *The Road to Serfdom* (London: Routledge, 1944); "The Use of Knowledge in Society," *American Economic Review* 35, no. 4 (1945): pp. 519–530.
38. Milton Friedman, "The Social Responsibility of Business Is to Increase Its Profits," *The New York Times Magazine*, September 13, 1970; reprinted in W. C. Zimmerli, M. Holzinger, and K. Richter (eds.), *Corporate Ethics and Corporate Governance* (Berlin and Heidelberg: Springer, 2007), pp. 173–178, DOI: 10.1007/978-3-540-70818-6_14. The wording repeats *Capitalism and Freedom* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962), chap. VIII: "to use its resources and engage in activities designed to increase its profits so long as it stays within the rules of the game."
39. Michael C. Jensen and William H. Meckling, "Theory of the Firm: Managerial Behavior, Agency Costs and Ownership Structure," *Journal of Financial Economics* 3, no. 4 (1976): pp. 305–360.
40. John Williamson, "What Washington Means by Policy Reform," in J. Williamson (ed.), *Latin American Adjustment: How Much Has Happened?* (Washington: Institute for International Economics, 1990).
41. Gerald A. Epstein (ed.), *Financialization and the World Economy* (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, 2005), p. 3.
42. Walter Eucken, *Grundsätze der Wirtschaftspolitik* (Bern and Tübingen: Francke and Mohr, 1952; posthumous).
43. Alfred Müller-Armack, *Wirtschaftslenkung und Marktwirtschaft* (Hamburg: Verlag für Wirtschaft und Sozialpolitik, 1947); Ludwig Erhard, *Wohlstand für Alle* (Düsseldorf: Econ, 1957); Wilhelm Röpke, *Jenseits von Angebot und Nachfrage* (Erlenbach-Zurich: Rentsch, 1958). Röpke taught at the Graduate Institute of International Studies in Geneva from 1937 until his death in 1966.
44. Agreement of 1937 in the Swiss machine and metal industry ("Vereinbarung in der Maschinenindustrie," according to Swissmem). See *Dictionnaire historique de la Suisse*, article "Grèves" (hls-dhs-dss.ch), and Swissmem, "Geschichte," accessed September 30, 2026, https://www.swissmem.ch/de/der-verband-der-maschinen-elektro-und-metall-industrie/geschichte.html. Federal Constitution of the Swiss Confederation of April 18, 1999 (SR 101), Art. 28, paras. 2–3.
45. Federal Constitution (SR 101), Art. 5a (quoted) and Art. 43a, para. 1; Art. 5a was adopted by popular vote on November 28, 2004 (reform of fiscal equalization), and has been in force since January 1, 2008, https://www.fedlex.admin.ch/eli/cc/1999/404/fr; English quoted from the official (non-binding) translation, https://www.fedlex.admin.ch/eli/cc/1999/404/en.
46. Swiss Code of Obligations (SR 220), Art. 828 ff. (cooperative society). Founding dates: Gottlieb Duttweiler Institute, "History," https://gdi.ch/en/about-us/gdi/history (Migros SA founded in 1925, converted into a cooperative and handed over to its customers in 1941); Coop, "Historique," https://www.coop.ch/fr/entreprise/groupe-coop/qui-sommes-nous/historique.html (1890); Raiffeisen, "L'histoire de Raiffeisen," https://www.raiffeisen.ch/rch/fr/qui-sommes-nous/groupe-raiffeisen/histoire.html (Bichelsee credit cooperative founded on December 21, 1899, "la première caisse Raiffeisen de Suisse à connaître un succès durable" [the first Raiffeisen credit cooperative in Switzerland to achieve lasting success]); la Mobilière, "Portrait de l'entreprise," https://www.mobiliere.ch/a-propos/la-mobiliere/portrait-entreprise (cooperative society founded in Bern in 1826) (all accessed September 30, 2026).
47. Saltsjöbaden Agreement between the Swedish Employers' Confederation (SAF) and the Swedish Trade Union Confederation (LO), December 20, 1938.
48. Loi n° 2014-856 du 31 juillet 2014 relative à l'économie sociale et solidaire (Law no. 2014-856 of July 31, 2014, on the social and solidarity economy), *Journal officiel de la République française*, August 1, 2014.
49. Leo XIII, Encyclical Letter *Rerum novarum*, May 15, 1891, accessed September 30, 2026, https://www.vatican.va/content/leo-xiii/fr/encyclicals/documents/hf_l-xiii_enc_15051891_rerum-novarum.html; summary drawn from *Magnifica Humanitas*, no. 30.
50. *Magnifica Humanitas*, no. 162; Pius XI, Encyclical Letter *Quadragesimo anno*, May 15, 1931, no. 79 (subsidiarity).
51. Karl Polanyi, *The Great Transformation* (New York: Farrar & Rinehart, 1944), chap. 6; French trans. *La Grande Transformation* (Paris: Gallimard, 1983).
52. E. F. Schumacher, *Small Is Beautiful: A Study of Economics as if People Mattered* (London: Blond & Briggs, 1973), chap. "Buddhist Economics."
53. Nicholas Georgescu-Roegen, *The Entropy Law and the Economic Process* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1971).
54. Donella H. Meadows, Dennis L. Meadows, Jørgen Randers, and William W. Behrens III, *The Limits to Growth* (New York: Universe Books, 1972).
55. Herman E. Daly, *Steady-State Economics* (San Francisco: W. H. Freeman, 1977).
56. Serge Latouche, *Le Pari de la décroissance* (Paris: Fayard, 2006); Giorgos Kallis, *Degrowth* (Newcastle: Agenda Publishing, 2018); Jason Hickel, *Less Is More* (London: William Heinemann, 2020).
57. Amartya Sen, *Development as Freedom* (New York: Knopf, 1999).
58. Elinor Ostrom, *Governing the Commons: The Evolution of Institutions for Collective Action* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), chap. 3 (Törbel, based on the work of Robert McC. Netting). Sveriges Riksbank Prize in Economic Sciences in Memory of Alfred Nobel 2009, shared with Oliver E. Williamson (nobelprize.org).
59. Garrett Hardin, "The Tragedy of the Commons," *Science* 162, no. 3859 (1968): pp. 1243–1248.
60. Daniel Kahneman and Amos Tversky, "Prospect Theory: An Analysis of Decision under Risk," *Econometrica* 47, no. 2 (1979): pp. 263–291; Richard H. Thaler and Cass R. Sunstein, *Nudge* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008). Nobel Prizes: Simon (1978), Kahneman (2002), Thaler (2017) (nobelprize.org).
61. Markus K. Brunnermeier, *The Resilient Society* (Colorado Springs: Endeavor Literary Press, 2021). Paraphrase.
62. David Fiorucci, working notes, February 14, 2025 ("Equilonomy").

CHAPTER 5

Attempts at Reconciliation: From the Best of All Possible Worlds to Peopleism

> *"[God] could not have failed to choose the best."*
>
> — Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, *Theodicy*, I, § 8 (1710)

> *"That is well said," replied Candide, "but we must cultivate our garden."*
>
> — Voltaire, *Candide, or Optimism*, chap. XXX (1759)

Chapter 4 traced a long dispute: Should the market be left to its own devices or steered? Should production be maximized or shared? Should we grow or stop? For half a century, another family of thought has tried to escape this either/or. It wants neither to abolish the business enterprise nor to leave it the sole judge of its own conduct. It seeks to **reconcile**: profit and society, the economy and the living world, performance and meaning.

These attempts—often sincere, sometimes decisive—have given us words that have entered everyday language: stakeholders, triple bottom line, shared value, mission-driven company, the Doughnut, well-being beyond GDP. They have also been co-opted, and since 2023 they have met a vigorous backlash—the pendulum swinging the other way.

We survey them with gratitude and lucidity. We begin with Leibniz, because the question they all ask—how can we obtain the best possible outcome under real constraints?—was thought through by him with rare depth. We end with a friend, Ravi Chaudhry, whose Peopleism carries these efforts forward at the level of whole systems. In between, we will look for what each attempt contributes, and for what it still lacks if balance is to become a practice.

5.1 Leibniz: The Best of All Possible Worlds

An Optimum, Not a Paradise

Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz (1646–1716) was a jurist, diplomat, and mathematician—inventor of the infinitesimal calculus, independently of Newton—as well as a librarian, historian, and philosopher. In 1710 he published the *Essais de Théodicée sur la bonté de Dieu, la liberté de l'homme et l'origine du mal* (*Theodicy: Essays on the Goodness of God, the Freedom of Man and the Origin of Evil*). The word "theodicy," which he coined, means "the justice of God": How can a good and wise God permit evil?

His answer has remained famous in a form that is almost always misunderstood. Among an infinity of possible worlds, God, whose wisdom is joined to goodness, could not have failed to choose the best (see the epigraph).[1] The *Monadology* (1714) sets out the logic in three paragraphs. Since there is an infinity of possible universes in the ideas of God, and only one can exist, there must be a sufficient reason for the choice (§ 53); this reason can be found only in "fitness" (*convenance*), that is, in the degrees of perfection these worlds contain (§ 54); and this is what causes the existence of the best, which God's wisdom makes known to him, his goodness makes him choose, and his power makes him produce (§ 55).[2]

The decisive point is that this "best" **is not a world without evil**. Leibniz says so plainly: the best of worlds contains suffering, because not all goods are possible together. Some exclude one another; others can be obtained only at the price of lesser evils. The best is therefore an **optimum under constraints**: the greatest perfection *compatible*—Leibniz says "compossible"—with all the others. In the *Discourse on Metaphysics* (1686), he characterizes it as the world that is at once the simplest in hypotheses and the richest in phenomena; the *Monadology* sees in it the means of obtaining as much variety as possible with the greatest possible order (§ 58).[3]

Here, more than two centuries before the economists, we recognize the very structure of an optimization problem: maximizing a richness (variety) subject to a constraint (order, coherence). Leibniz, the mathematician of the differential calculus, knew that a maximum is not a matter of "ever more": it is a point at which one can no longer gain on one side without losing more on the other.

Justice as the Charity of the Wise; Love as Joy in Another's Happiness

What is less well known is that Leibniz linked this thinking about the optimum to an ethics of love. In 1693, in the preface to his *Codex juris gentium diplomaticus*—a collection of international treaties—he proposes three definitions in cascade. Justice is the **charity of the wise** (*caritas sapientis*). Charity is universal benevolence. And **to love** is "to delight in the happiness of another": *amare sive diligere est felicitate alterius delectari*.[4]

This definition is remarkably subtle. It does not make love a sacrifice of self: the one who loves finds their own joy in the happiness of the other. Self-interest and generosity cease to be adversaries. And justice is not the cold application of rules: it is this love **guided by wisdom**, that is, by knowledge of what truly makes for each person's good. Love without wisdom can do harm in trying to help; wisdom without love calculates correctly and acts coldly. Leibnizian justice holds the two together.

Voltaire, Lisbon, and the Garden

On November 1, 1755, an earthquake followed by a tsunami and fires destroyed much of Lisbon and killed tens of thousands of people. For Voltaire, the event made the formula "all is well" (*tout est bien*) unbearable—a formula popularized by Alexander Pope's poem *An Essay on Man* (1733–1734), which declared that "Whatever is, is right."[5] He responded first with the *Poème sur le désastre de Lisbonne* (Poem on the Lisbon disaster, 1756), then, in 1759, with *Candide, or Optimism*.

In it, the tutor Pangloss teaches that "there is no effect without a cause" and that everything is "for the best" in "the best of all possible worlds," while war, the Inquisition, slavery, and shipwrecks rain down on the characters. The satire is irresistible. Its target is less Leibniz's subtle thought than its popularized version—that of Pope, of certain disciples of Christian Wolff, and of

all who use optimism as a reason to change nothing. At the end of the journey, Candide does not refute Pangloss with another metaphysics. He answers with a practice: "we must cultivate our garden."[6]

What Equiconscism Keeps, and What It Changes

Equiconscism inherits **three intuitions** from Leibniz.

- **Harmony**: an accord of differences, not uniformity (see chapter 6). This is the philosophical foundation of differentiated equity.
- **The optimum under constraints**: the best is not the maximum of a single variable but the best possible combination of goods that limit one another. This is exactly Equiconscism's second principle, "right measure rather than the maximum," and the idea of the corridor, bounded by floors and ceilings (see chapter 7).
- **The link between the optimum and love**: for Leibniz, the best is chosen not by an indifferent intelligence but by a wisdom joined to goodness. Conscious balance, likewise, is not a neutral calculation. It requires opening one's heart and delighting in the good of others—including those who are absent from the decision.

But it parts ways with him on **one decisive point**. For Leibniz, the best has already been chosen: it lies behind us, in the divine decision, and the philosopher's task is to understand it. Cut off from its depth, this stance can slide into a justification of the status quo—the drift that Voltaire ridiculed. **Conscious balance is not a justification of the status quo.** It never asserts that whatever is, is good. On the contrary, it observes that today's world is far from the corridor of right measure (see chapter 1), and it makes the optimum a **human task**, always to be taken up again, within the limits of our knowledge.

One might put it this way: Equiconscism takes from Leibniz the idea of the best possible, and from Voltaire the idea of the garden. The best is not a verdict pronounced once and for all; it is a direction, sought through small adjustments, right where we are. Candide's garden—a small community in which each person works according to their talents and which renounces sterile disputes—is already an image of the micro and meso levels at which conscious balance is practiced.

5.2 Corporate Social Responsibility and Stakeholders

Bowen, 1953: The Conscience of the Businessman

The modern idea of corporate social responsibility (CSR) was born in the United States after the Second World War. In 1953, at the request of the Federal Council of Churches, the economist Howard R. Bowen published *Social Responsibilities of the Businessman*. There he defined social responsibilities as the obligation of business leaders to pursue the policies, make the decisions, and follow the lines of action that are "desirable in terms of the objectives and values of our society."[7] The historian of CSR Archie B. Carroll later called Bowen the "father" of the field.[8]

The founding intuition deserves notice: Bowen does not begin by proposing a norm but a **widening of the leader's awareness**. Their decisions affect people who are not in the room, and they must take those people into account. This is, in embryo, widening the gaze.

Carroll, 1991: The Pyramid

In 1991, writing in *Business Horizons*, Carroll proposed a representation that has since become classic: the **pyramid of CSR**.[9] At the base lies economic responsibility (being profitable); above it, legal responsibility (obeying the law); then ethical responsibility (doing what is right, beyond the law); and at the top, philanthropic responsibility (contributing to the community). The pyramid had the merit of saying that profitability is a condition, not an end, and that the law is a floor, not a moral ceiling.

It also has a flaw, which Carroll himself later qualified: its shape suggests an order of priority in which ethics and generosity come "afterward," once everything else is secured. In practice, CSR has often been experienced in just this way—as an activity **added on** to the core business, entrusted to a department, funded when results allow. Ravi Chaudhry sums up this limitation in a single formula: "part-time 'corporate social responsibility' (CSR) must give way to 'socially responsible corporations' (SRC)."[10]

In Europe, the European Commission gave a leaner and more demanding definition in 2011: CSR is "the responsibility of enterprises for their impacts on society."[11] The international standard ISO 26000 (2010) broke it down into seven core subjects, from governance to human rights and the environment.[12] The shift is clear: the question is no longer what the company *gives* but what effects it *produces*, intended or not.

Freeman, 1984: Stakeholders

In 1984, R. Edward Freeman published *Strategic Management: A Stakeholder Approach*. In it he defined a stakeholder as "any group or individual who can affect or is affected by the achievement of the organization's objectives."[13] The word plays on *shareholder*: a company has not only owners but also employees, customers, suppliers, communities, and an environment.

Stakeholder theory is one of the most fruitful contributions of the period. It provided a map; it legitimized listening; it opened the way to materiality analyses and structured dialogue. Equiconscism is its direct heir: its "those involved" and "those affected" are a translation of it.

Yet it adds two things. First, **those absent**. Freeman's definition includes those who *can affect* the company or *are affected* by it; in practice, we listen above all to those who have the means to make themselves heard. Future generations, non-human beings, and distant people at the far end of a supply chain have neither voice nor power to cause harm: they risk falling off the map. Second, **the weighing**. Identifying stakeholders does not tell us how to arbitrate among them when their interests diverge. That is the work of the scales, the corridor, and the ten key questions.

5.3 The Triple Bottom Line

Elkington: Three Bottom Lines for a Single Company

In 1994, the British consultant John Elkington, who in 1987 had cofounded the consultancy SustainAbility, published an article in the *California Management Review* titled "Towards the Sustainable Corporation: Win-Win-Win Business Strategies for Sustainable Development."[14] In it he argued that companies can win by simultaneously creating value for themselves, for their cus-

tomers, and for the environment. It was around this time that he coined the expression **"triple bottom line,"** which he developed in 1997 in *Cannibals with Forks: The Triple Bottom Line of 21st Century Business.*[15]

The image is simple: the "bottom line" of an income statement is profit. Elkington proposed keeping **three** of them: an economic line, a social line, and an environmental line—often summed up in the formula "People, Planet, Profit." The book's title is a provocation: Is a cannibal who eats with a fork a sign of progress? For Elkington, yes—if we learn to civilize capitalism from within.

The contribution has been immense. The TBL fed the first sustainability reports, then the standards of the Global Reporting Initiative, and it established the idea that a company's performance is measured along several dimensions. The three dimensions of Equiconscism—a measured and shared economy, an inclusive society built on solidarity, a respected and regenerated living world—are its recognizable heirs.

The 2018 "Recall"

Twenty-five years later, Elkington made a rare gesture. On June 25, 2018, in the *Harvard Business Review*, he published an article titled "25 Years Ago I Coined the Phrase 'Triple Bottom Line.' Here's Why It's Time to Rethink It."[16] In it he carried out—to use his own metaphor—a "recall" of his concept, as a manufacturer recalls a defective product. His diagnosis: the TBL was meant to be a provocation, a way of rethinking capitalism; it had been reduced, for the most part, to an accounting tool, used to balance trade-offs rather than to do things differently.

This self-criticism deserves respect, and it sheds light on three limitations.

- **Offsetting.** Three columns side by side invite offsetting: an excellent financial result "buys back" poor social or ecological performance. But a destroyed forest cannot be repaid with a dividend. The corridor of right measure answers this difficulty with **floors** and **ceilings** that cannot be offset against each other.
- **State rather than process.** The TBL takes a snapshot of a result at year's end. It says nothing about how an organization perceives, listens, discerns, and adjusts over the course of the year.
- **Presupposed consciousness.** The framework assumes a change in how leaders see, without equipping them for it. Hence, often, impeccable reporting and an unchanged culture.

Echoing the TBL, Ravi Chaudhry has proposed a sustainable "Triple Top Line" of joy, peace and contentment, which shifts attention from the accounting result to what people actually experience.[17] Equiconscism joins this intuition through its tenth key question, "Joy and Vitality": Does this action nourish joy, the élan of life, and beauty—signs of conscious balance rather than of mere performance?

5.4 Hazel Henderson and the Win-Win World

An Economist Off the Beaten Path

Hazel Henderson (1933–2022), born in England and settled in the United States, held no university degree in economics. Yet she became one of the most original critics of mainstream economics, which she urged to become a discipline of living systems. A futurist and the author of some ten

books—from *Creating Alternative Futures* (1978) to *The Politics of the Solar Age* (1981) and *Ethical Markets* (2006)—she was an honorary member of the Club of Rome and the founder of Ethical Markets Media.[18]

In 1996 she published *Building a Win-Win World: Life Beyond Global Economic Warfare* (San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler).[19] The title states the thesis. The global economy of the 1990s was conceived as a **war**: competitiveness among nations, a race for market share, deregulation, social and tax dumping. This game is zero-sum, or even negative-sum: what one side gains, the other loses, and the planet pays the difference. Henderson proposed changing its rules to make **positive-sum games** possible, in which cooperation creates more value than rivalry—through international agreements, common standards, taxes on speculation and pollution, and above all through indicators that stop counting destruction as wealth.

Measuring Differently: The Calvert-Henderson Indicators

Henderson held a conviction: you cannot change what you do not measure. She had long shown that GDP ignores most of the real economy—domestic work, mutual aid, volunteering, the services nature renders free of charge—which she depicted as a layer cake: the monetized economy, with the private sector as its icing, occupies only the top layers, resting on the non-monetized economy and on nature.[20] In 2000, with the investment management firm Calvert, she published the **Calvert-Henderson Quality of Life Indicators**, a set of indicators covering, among other things, education, employment, energy, the environment, health, human rights, income, infrastructure, security, and housing.[21] It was one of the first systematic attempts to measure a country's quality of life beyond production.

In 2005 she also launched the EthicMark Awards, which honor advertising campaigns that uplift the human spirit. Ravi Chaudhry, who co-chairs the panel of judges, pays tribute to her in *Capitalism to Peopleism* and regrets that, since her death in 2022, the initiative has needed a new home.[22] Henderson is thus a **shared lineage** linking Peopleism and Equiconscism.

What Win-Win Teaches, and What It Asks

Henderson's legacy comes down to one idea that Equiconscism makes its own: **balance is not the division of a fixed pie but the search for decisions in which each party strengthens the others**. This is the meaning of the words "one another" in the canonical definition (see chapter 7). Here we also find, strikingly, Leibniz's definition of love: to delight in another's happiness is precisely to turn a zero-sum game into a positive-sum one.

Two cautions are nonetheless in order. First, win-win does not always exist. There are decisions in which someone must give something up—a profit, a habit, a privilege—and declaring them a "win for all" can serve to dodge the question of sharing. Conscious balance does not promise that everyone wins everything, right away; it seeks to ensure that no one falls below the floor and that nothing exceeds the ceiling. Second, Henderson's indicators were designed for countries and for experts. They opened the way to well-being dashboards (section 5.8), but they do not tell a small or medium-sized enterprise (SME), a municipality, or a family how to ask itself the right questions, week after week.

5.5 Shared Value, Stakeholder Capitalism, Conscious Capitalism, and ESG

Shared Value (Porter and Kramer, 2011)

In January–February 2011, Michael E. Porter and Mark R. Kramer published "Creating Shared Value" in the *Harvard Business Review*.[23] In the aftermath of the financial crisis, they observed that capitalism was suffering a crisis of legitimacy and that CSR, being peripheral, offered no answer to it. They proposed placing the creation of social value **at the heart of strategy**: generating economic value in a way that also creates value for society, by addressing its needs and challenges. They put forward three levers: reconceiving products and markets (for example, for underserved populations), redefining productivity in the value chain (less energy, less waste, fewer risks for suppliers), and strengthening local ecosystems (training, infrastructure, business clusters).

The idea won over many executive teams, because it speaks their language: responsibility becomes a source of competitive advantage. An influential academic critique pointed out that it ignores the real **tensions** between social and economic goals, that it too readily assumes that compliance with the law can be taken for granted, and that it risks attending only to those social problems that are profitable to solve.[24] In other words, shared value illuminates the zone where private interests and the common good overlap; it is silent about the zone where they diverge—which is precisely where conscious balance is most needed.

Stakeholder Capitalism (2019–2020)

On August 19, 2019, the Business Roundtable, which brings together the chief executives of major American companies, published a new "Statement on the Purpose of a Corporation," signed by 181 CEOs. In it they committed to lead their companies "for the benefit of all stakeholders—customers, employees, suppliers, communities and shareholders." The organization noted that every version of its principles since 1997 had endorsed shareholder primacy, and that the new statement superseded them.[25] A few months later, on December 2, 2019, Klaus Schwab presented the World Economic Forum's "Davos Manifesto 2020," whose first article states that the purpose of a company is to engage all its stakeholders in shared and sustained value creation.[26]

These texts marked a symbolic break with the doctrine Milton Friedman had formulated in 1970 (see chapter 4). Their practical reach has been more disputed. A legal study showed that most signatory companies had changed neither their bylaws nor their governance rules, and had not involved their boards of directors in the commitment.[27] Ravi Chaudhry observes, with his gift for a phrase, that the pandemic was the first test of this promise—"the verdict was mixed"—and that the years that followed would show "whether worthy capitalists will outnumber unworthy capitalists."[28]

Conscious Capitalism (Mackey and Sisodia, 2013)

In 2013, John Mackey, cofounder of the Whole Foods Market chain, and Professor Raj Sisodia published *Conscious Capitalism: Liberating the Heroic Spirit of Business*.[29] The movement that bears this name rests on four principles: a **higher purpose** (knowing *why* the company exists), **stakeholder orientation** (creating value with and for stakeholders, in their interdependence), **conscious leadership**, and **conscious culture**.[30]

The kinship with Equiconscism is evident: the word "conscious" is central to it, and the first key question—"Meaning and Purpose"—finds a direct echo there. The difference lies less in intentions than in method. Conscious Capitalism describes qualities (a conscious leader, a conscious culture) more than it describes the process by which they are acquired and sustained. It also remains, by design, a defense of market capitalism, whose "heroic" potential it seeks to reveal: it says little about ceilings, right measure, or the sharing of value.

ESG: From Promise to Backlash

The acronym **ESG**—environmental, social, and governance—appeared in 2004 in the report *Who Cares Wins*, prepared under the aegis of the United Nations Global Compact together with financial institutions.[31] The aim was to integrate these criteria into financial analysis. In two decades, ESG became an industry: ratings, indices, funds, green bonds, regulations.

It has rendered real services—making ignored risks visible, bringing the climate into boardrooms—but it has revealed three weaknesses. The first is **greenwashing**: vague or misleading environmental promises. The European Union has responded, notably, with Directive (EU) 2024/825 on empowering consumers for the green transition, which prohibits generic, unsubstantiated environmental claims and whose measures apply from September 27, 2026.[32] The second is **ratings divergence**: the same company can be judged excellent by one agency and mediocre by another, which blurs the signal. The third is the confusion between **risk to the company** and **the company's impact on the world**—two things that the European notion of "double materiality" has sought precisely to distinguish.

Since 2023, the pendulum has swung back the other way. In the United States, ESG has become a political issue; several states have passed laws restricting its use in the management of public funds, and on March 27, 2025, the Securities and Exchange Commission stopped defending in court its own climate disclosure rules, adopted a year earlier.[33] In Europe, Directive (EU) 2026/470, known as "Omnibus I," published in the *Official Journal of the European Union* on February 26, 2026, sharply narrowed the scope of the Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive (CSRD) and the Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive (CSDDD): for financial years beginning on or after January 1, 2027, sustainability reporting will be mandatory only for companies with more than 1,000 employees and more than €450 million in net revenue, and, from July 26, 2029, the due diligence obligation will apply only to companies with more than 5,000 employees and €1.5 billion in revenue[34] (see chapters 9 and 14).

This backlash calls for a balanced reading. It responded to real excesses: a disproportionate administrative burden for midsize companies, an inflation of indicators. But it risks throwing the baby out with the bathwater, at the very moment when planetary boundaries are being transgressed. For Equiconscism, the lesson is clear: **a balance that rests solely on external constraint swings with every change of political majority**. Reporting is useful; it does not replace consciousness. An organization that has internalized the questions of meaning, impact, and listening keeps asking them when the obligation disappears.

5.6 B Corps, Mission-Driven Companies, and Patagonia

Changing the Form of the Company

Another family of attempts is not content to measure: it changes the very **structure** of the company, so that its commitments no longer depend solely on the goodwill of its leaders of the moment.

The B Corp movement. Founded in 2006 in the United States, the nonprofit B Lab certifies companies that meet a verified level of social and environmental performance, commit legally to taking all their stakeholders into account, and publish their results.[35] The movement counted nearly 10,000 certified companies in early 2025; on April 8, 2025, B Lab published new standards, which it presents as the most significant evolution in its history, and in July 2025 it announced that more than one million people were working in B Corps.[36] Ravi Chaudhry sees in them one of the economy's "new benchmarks," stressing that the vast majority of B Corps are small and medium-sized businesses.[37]

The mission-driven company. In France, Law no. 2019-486 of May 22, 2019, on business growth and transformation, known as the PACTE law, introduced three levels of commitment. First, the Civil Code now requires every company to be managed in its own corporate interest, "taking into consideration the social and environmental issues raised by its activity" (our translation). Second, a company may write a **purpose** (*raison d'être*) into its articles of association. Finally, it may adopt the status of *société à mission* (mission-driven company): it then specifies in its articles its purpose and its social and environmental objectives, sets up a mission committee to monitor their implementation (or, in companies with fewer than fifty employees, appoints a mission officer), and submits to verification by an independent third-party body.[38] Other countries have similar forms, such as the American *benefit corporation* or the Italian *società benefit*.

The story of Danone shows both the strength and the fragility of these arrangements. In June 2020, its shareholders voted to adopt the status of *société à mission*, making Danone the first listed company to do so. In March 2021, its CEO, Emmanuel Faber, was ousted under pressure from minority activist funds that judged its stock-market performance insufficient. Ravi Chaudhry draws a stern conclusion: "for many shareholders, 'stakeholders' primacy' is just another empty slogan."[39] A more nuanced reading is possible: the mission was not abandoned, but the episode showed that a legal form is not enough if the culture of governance and shareholders' expectations do not follow.

Patagonia: "Earth Is Now Our Only Shareholder"

On September 14, 2022, Yvon Chouinard, founder of the outdoor clothing company Patagonia, announced that his family had transferred ownership of the company. The voting shares (2%) were entrusted to the Patagonia Purpose Trust, charged with protecting the company's values; the nonvoting shares (98%) went to the Holdfast Collective, a nonprofit organization that devotes profits not reinvested in the business to fighting the environmental crisis. The phrase that went around the world: "Earth is now our only shareholder."[40]

The gesture inscribes purpose in **ownership** itself, where power ultimately resides. It joins the tradition of the foundation-owned companies of northern Europe and of the Tata Group (see chapter 9). It has also sparked debate, notably over its tax treatment.[41] Above all, it is hardly reproducible: it presupposes a founder-owner, a profitable company, and a family ready to give up its fortune.

What These Forms Contribute, and Their Limits

B Corps, mission-driven companies, and ownership in the general interest share a common merit: they **anchor** commitment in law or in the structure of capital, which makes it more durable than a leader's declaration. But they describe a **status**. A certification obtained or a mission written into the articles of association risks becoming a finish line, whereas balance is lost as soon as one stops tending it. This is the first principle of Equiconscism: no label, no certification exempts anyone from beginning the cycle again.

5.7 Economies That Imitate the Living World

Alongside reforms of the company, broader models propose redesigning the entire economy. All share one intuition: the economy must stop being a straight line—extract, produce, discard—and come to resemble the cycles of the living world more closely.

- **The circular economy.** Launched in 2010 by the sailor Ellen MacArthur, the foundation that bears her name has popularized a model based on three principles: eliminate waste and pollution, circulate products and materials at their highest value, and regenerate nature.[42] The idea has made its way into public policy, notably the European Circular Economy Action Plan. Yet the *Circularity Gap Report* found in 2025 that "global circularity is still moving in reverse": the economy still extracts more virgin materials than it recycles.[43] The loop has been designed; the total volume, however, has no ceiling.
- **The Economy for the Common Good.** In 2010, the Austrian Christian Felber published *Die Gemeinwohl-Ökonomie* (the economy for the common good) and launched, together with Austrian companies, a movement that later spread to Germany, Switzerland, and South Tyrol.[44] Participating organizations draw up a "common good balance sheet" using a matrix that crosses values (human dignity, solidarity and social justice, environmental sustainability, transparency and codetermination) with their stakeholder groups. It is one of the few approaches that give SMEs and municipalities a concrete **self-assessment tool**; it nonetheless remains time-consuming and little known outside the German-speaking and Romance-language regions of Europe.
- **The symbiotic economy.** In 2017, the French author Isabelle Delannoy published *L'Économie symbiotique. Régénérer la planète, l'économie et la société* (The symbiotic economy: Regenerating the planet, the economy, and society; Actes Sud).[45] In it she describes an economy founded on symbiosis among human intelligence, ecosystems, and technical tools, in which each activity enriches the others instead of exhausting them, drawing on concrete examples of permaculture, cooperatives, and local territories.
- **The regenerative economy.** In April 2015, the American financier John Fullerton, a former JP Morgan executive and founder of the Capital Institute, published *Regenerative Capitalism*.[46] In it he proposes eight principles drawn from the science of living systems, the last of which,

"**Seeks Balance**," makes balance an essential condition of systemic health. Ravi Chaudhry cites him: an economy aligned with "the patterns and principles of a living system."[47] Equiconscism joins Fullerton on two essential points: regeneration rather than mere preservation (the sixth principle) and balance as a dynamic.

- **Doughnut economics.** In 2017, the British economist Kate Raworth published *Doughnut Economics*, which depicts the "safe and just space" for humanity between a social foundation of twelve essential needs and an ecological ceiling of nine planetary boundaries.[48] In April 2020, the city of Amsterdam adopted a strategy inspired by the Doughnut. Chapter 7 shows what the corridor of right measure owes to it and how it differs: a floor and a ceiling for each dimension, including the economy, at every level, with a dynamic and a consciousness that regulates.

These models form a coherent and valuable constellation. What they have in common is that they describe **what an economy that imitates the living world ought to be**. They say less about how a person, a team, or a municipality concretely moves from today's economy to that one—and stays there.

5.8 Beyond GDP

On March 18, 1968, at the University of Kansas, Robert F. Kennedy declared that the gross national product "measures everything in short, except that which makes life worthwhile."[49] His warning extended the one issued by Simon Kuznets, one of the architects of national accounting, as early as 1934 (see chapter 1). Since then, attempts to measure progress differently have multiplied.

Initiative	Year	What It Measures or Proposes	Main Contribution
Gross National Happiness (Bhutan)	1970s; 2008 Constitution	"The State shall strive to promote those conditions that will enable the pursuit of Gross National Happiness" (Art. 9(2))[50]	Well-being as a public goal
Human Development Index (UNDP)	1990	A long and healthy life, knowledge, a decent standard of living[51]	Inspired by Amartya Sen: development as the expansion of capabilities
Genuine Progress Indicator (GPI)	1995	Consumption adjusted for inequality, nonmarket work, and social and environmental damage	Globally, GPI per capita has plateaued since 1978, while GDP has kept growing[52]
Stiglitz-Sen-Fitoussi Commission	2009	Measuring well-being, its distribution, and its sustainability, not just production[53]	International academic legitimacy
OECD, *Better Life Index*	2011	Eleven dimensions of well-being, which each user can weight[54]	Citizens choose what matters to them
Wellbeing Budget (New Zealand)	May 30, 2019	Budget priorities set on the basis of well-being indicators[55]	Well-being enters budget decisions

Initiative	Year	What It Measures or Proposes	Main Contribution
Wellbeing Economy Governments (WEGo)	2018	A partnership of countries and regions: Scotland, Iceland, New Zealand, then Wales, Finland, Canada[56]	Mutual learning among governments
Sustainable Development Goals (UN)	September 25, 2015	17 goals and 169 targets, "integrated and indivisible," for 2030[57]	A common global language

The record is mixed. These indicators have changed the debate: no serious government still claims that GDP is enough. The encyclical *Magnifica Humanitas* says so in its turn: "The development of parameters and metrics complementary to GDP is crucial."[58] Ravi Chaudhry proposes to "differentiate between mere growth and real development" and to track the growth in income of the least well-off 80% of the population.[59] But alternative indicators remain **alongside** GDP rather than in its place. The United Nations' 2025 SDG report finds that only 35% of the targets are on track or making moderate progress, and that 18% are in reverse.[60] Measuring better is not enough: the measurement must also change decisions, at every level.

Here a shared limitation comes into view. These dashboards are designed **for national governments and for experts**. They shed light on the macro level; they do not reach down to the decisions of an SME, a municipal council, or a family. Equiconscism proposes to complement them with a tier that indicators cannot provide: questions that everyone can ask themselves, and a simple scorecard for answering them (see chapters 8 and 14).

5.9 Ravi Chaudhry and Peopleism

A Friend, a Vision

Among recent proposals, one is especially close to us. Ravi Chaudhry, founder chairman of CeNext Consulting, who for three decades has advised large corporations and governments on leading through turbulence, published *Capitalism to Peopleism: Inspiring a Leadership Transformation* (New Delhi: Simon & Schuster India) in 2024; in 2025 the book received the FICCI Publishing Awards' "Business Book of the Year – Business Management" distinction.[61] On March 22, 2026, marking the 250th anniversary of *The Wealth of Nations*, he extended his reflection in *Fortune*. Ravi Chaudhry and David Fiorucci maintain a friendly dialogue; their two approaches arose separately and have recognized each other.

The book starts from an unsparing diagnosis: "capitalism as it is practiced today is concerned only with itself and is fixated only on profits and growth," blind to social and environmental realities.[62] Ravi Chaudhry offers a striking image of this: corporate objectives and societal expectations are like the two rails of a railway track, which appear to meet on the horizon but never actually join.[63] Every attempt in this chapter can be read as an effort to make those rails finally meet.

The Key Ideas of Peopleism

Ravi Chaudhry defines Peopleism as a system of governance that gathers the collective aspirations of all citizens and responds to them, within the limits of sustainable resources (see chapter 7). Its key ideas can be summarized as follows.

- **Capital, people, nature.** Every human endeavor needs three components; to succeed as a capitalist, one must also be a "Peopleist" and a "Natureist." In *Fortune*, he adds: "To privilege one while degrading the others is a formula for systemic instability and long-term fragility."[64]
- **Capital as a means.** Peopleism does not reject capital: "Capital will stay and retain its pre-eminent status as always. But 'people issues' will be prioritized over 'capital issues.'"[65]
- **From CSR to the socially responsible corporation.** Moving from "shareholder primacy" to "planetary primacy" requires part-time CSR to give way to corporations that are socially responsible in their very being.[66]
- **From trickle-down to "surge-up."** Against *trickle-down* growth models, Ravi Chaudhry sets *surge-up* models, which raise incomes from the base upward.[67]
- **From knowledge to wisdom.** He describes the passage from a knowledge economy, which always wants more, to a wisdom economy, which understands the concept of "enough" (see chapter 7). Wisdom is defined there as follows: "Wisdom is knowledge enlivened by awareness, committed to bridge building and infused with compassion."[68] This is the **ABC** of the wise leader: *Awareness*, *Bridge-Building*, *Compassion*.
- **Democratizing democracy.** Peopleism rests on a "cardinal premise": good governance emerges not from the acquisition of authority by a few but from "the acquisition of the capacity by all to resist authority when it is abused."[69]

In Peopleism we find almost every attempt discussed in this chapter, but transformed: CSR becomes an identity; the triple bottom line becomes a "Triple Top Line" of joy, peace and contentment; shared value becomes a "need to share"; Hazel Henderson's win-win becomes a horizon for civilization. Ravi Chaudhry, moreover, cites Raworth, Fullerton, B Corps, and the wellbeing economies as so many converging voices.[70]

A Natural Complementarity

Peopleism works mainly at the **macro** level: constitutions, parliaments, taxation, global institutions, large corporations. It also includes meso-level elements—criteria for "responsibly profitable" companies, ethics training for leaders—and a demanding personal ethic. Ravi Chaudhry himself, drawing on Peter Senge, raises the question of how individual wisdom can become institutional wisdom.[71] And he writes, of the change of civilization he calls for: "Such a change will not come by itself; it has to be consciously evolved, nursed, and led."[72]

This is exactly where Equiconscism can contribute its share. Ravi Chaudhry says **why** we must change and **toward what**, at the level of systems. Equiconscism proposes **how**: questions, a cycle, scorecards, and practices, so that this change is "consciously evolved" in daily life—in families, teams, companies, and municipalities. The dialogue table in chapter 7 (section 7.13) sets out these correspondences in detail. Let us retain the essential point here: this is not a hierarchy between two bodies of thought but a division of labor between friends.

5.10 Taking Stock: What These Attempts Have Opened Up, and What Remains to Be Done

Comparative Table

Attempt	Intention	Main Level	Tools	Main Limitation
Leibniz (1710–1714)	To think the best possible under constraints, united with goodness	Philosophical	Harmony, optimum, charity of the wise	Risk of justifying the status quo (Panglossian drift)
CSR and stakeholders (1953–1991)	To widen the leader's responsibility	Meso	Pyramid, stakeholder mapping	An add-on activity; those absent fall off the map
Triple Bottom Line (1994–1997)	To measure three kinds of performance	Meso	Three-column reporting	Offsetting between columns; reduced to accounting
Win-win world (1996–2000)	To move from economic warfare to positive-sum games	Macro	Quality-of-life indicators	For experts and national governments; win-win is not always possible
Shared value, stakeholder capitalism, and Conscious Capitalism (2011–2020)	To reconcile strategy and society	Meso (large companies)	Strategy, statements, principles	Silent on conflicts of interest; commitments rarely translated into governance
ESG and reporting (2004–2026)	To make risks and impacts visible	Meso and financial markets	Ratings, standards, directives	Depends on external constraint; greenwashing; backlash
B Corps, mission-driven companies, Patagonia (2006–2022)	To anchor purpose in law or ownership	Meso	Certification, articles of association, trust	A status once obtained becomes a finish line; hard to reproduce
Economies of the living world (2010–2017)	To refound the economy on the cycles of the living world	Macro and meso	Principles, matrices, the Doughnut	Describe the destination more than the path
Beyond GDP (1990–2019)	To measure well-being and sustainability	Macro	Indices, dashboards, budgets	Alongside GDP rather than in its place; little purchase on local decisions
Peopleism (2024–2026)	To put people and nature first, with capital as a means	Mainly macro	Principles, institutions, taxation, ABC leadership	Method of application at the meso and micro levels still to be equipped with tools

The Five Gaps

These attempts prepared the ground for Equiconscism, which owes them almost everything. But examining them reveals **five gaps**, which we state with respect, for they stem less from their authors' shortcomings than from questions those authors were not asking.

1. **Dynamics.** Most of these models describe a **target state**—a balanced report, a certification, a safe and just space—more than a **process of regulation**. Yet a balance once reached is lost as soon as one stops tending it. A pendulum at rest no longer tells the time.

2. **Consciousness.** All of them presuppose a change in how people see—more responsible leaders, more clear-sighted investors, more attentive citizens—without **equipping** that change. They say what a conscious person would do; they say little about how one becomes such a person and remains one.
3. **Differentiation.** Many rely on uniform standards: the same indicators for a multinational and an SME, the same criteria for a mountain region and a metropolis. Differentiated equity reminds us that not everyone needs the same thing, and that uniformity can push the most vulnerable below the floor.
4. **Linking the levels.** They act at the macro level **or** at the meso level, rarely both, and almost never at the micro level. National indicators do not speak to families; corporate labels do not speak to governments. The part and the whole, to borrow Ravi Chaudhry's terms, must each be held within the other.
5. **Everyday practicability.** They produce indicators for experts, reports for regulators, principles for boards of directors—and few **questions for everyone**. Yet it is in ordinary decisions, made every day by millions of people, that the real economy takes shape.

Toward Equiconscism

Equiconscism does not claim to replace these attempts. It links them and offers them what they lack: a **dynamic** (the cycle Perceive, Listen, Discern, Adjust, Answer and Pass On), an **equipped consciousness** (widening the gaze and its five gestures), **differentiation** (differentiated equity and the corridor of right measure), **linking** (from micro to macro, through subsidiarity and solidarity), and **practicability** (ten key questions that everyone can ask themselves, and a scorecard for answering them).

With Peopleism, the complementarity is explicit: Ravi Chaudhry says *why* and *toward what* at the level of systems; Equiconscism proposes *how*, in daily life, at the meso and micro levels. Leibniz bequeathed us the idea of the best possible, Voltaire that of the garden. Part III of this book strives to hold the two together: it begins with what the sages and the scientists teach us about balance, consciousness, and movement (chapter 6), before setting out Equiconscism itself (chapter 7).

In Brief

- **Leibniz** conceived the best as an **optimum under constraints**, united with love ("to delight in the happiness of another") and with justice as the "charity of the wise." Equiconscism keeps its harmony and right measure but rejects any justification of the status quo: the best is a task, not a verdict—Candide's garden rather than Pangloss's discourse.
- **CSR and stakeholder theory** (Bowen, Carroll, Freeman) widened corporate responsibility; Equiconscism adds those absent and the weighing.
- **The Triple Bottom Line** (Elkington, 1994–1997) established three dimensions of performance, but its own author acknowledged in 2018 that it had been reduced to an accounting tool.
- **Hazel Henderson** opened the way to a win-win world and to quality-of-life indicators: a shared lineage with Peopleism.
- **Shared value, stakeholder capitalism, Conscious Capitalism, ESG, B Corps, mission-driven companies, economies of the living world, beyond-GDP indicators**: so many real advances,

weakened by the backlash of 2023–2026 and by their dependence on target states and external constraint.

- Ravi Chaudhry's **Peopleism** says *why* and *toward what* at the level of systems; Equiconscism proposes *how*, in daily life, at the meso and micro levels.
- **Five gaps** to fill: dynamics, consciousness, differentiation, linking the levels, everyday practicability.

Notes

1. G. W. Leibniz, *Essais de Théodicée sur la bonté de Dieu, la liberté de l'homme et l'origine du mal* (Amsterdam: Troyel, 1710), I, § 8; ed. J. Brunschwig (Paris: GF-Flammarion, 1969). The epigraph renders the main clause of this paragraph, as quoted by P. Janet in the introduction to his edition of the *Œuvres philosophiques de Leibniz* (our translation); the passages from the *Monadology* and the *Discourse on Metaphysics* are paraphrased in the text.
2. Leibniz, *Monadologie* (1714), §§ 53–55; text in C. I. Gerhardt, ed., *Die philosophischen Schriften von G. W. Leibniz*, vol. VI (Berlin: Weidmann, 1885); ed. M. Fichant (Paris: Gallimard, "Folio essais," 2004).
3. Leibniz, *Discours de métaphysique* (1686), § 6; *Monadologie*, § 58.
4. Leibniz, preface to the *Codex juris gentium diplomaticus* (Hanover, 1693); Latin text of the original edition: "definiemus caritatem sapientis, hoc est sequentem sapientiae dictata"; "Amare autem sive diligere est felicitate alterius delectari" (digitized copy, accessed September 30, 2026, https://archive.org/details/bub_gb_FjBUy460S8kC); English trans. in P. Riley, ed., *Leibniz: Political Writings*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), p. 171. See also Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, "Leibniz's Ethics," accessed September 30, 2026, https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/leibniz-ethics/. The English renderings of the Latin in the text are our translation.
5. Alexander Pope, *An Essay on Man*, Epistle I (1733), l. 294: "One truth is clear, 'Whatever is, is right.'"
6. Voltaire, *Candide ou l'Optimisme* ([Geneva: Cramer], 1759), chaps. I and XXX. Quotations in the text and epigraph: our translation.
7. Howard R. Bowen, *Social Responsibilities of the Businessman* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1953; repr., Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2013).
8. Archie B. Carroll, "Corporate Social Responsibility: Evolution of a Definitional Construct," *Business & Society* 38, no. 3 (1999): pp. 268–295.
9. Archie B. Carroll, "The Pyramid of Corporate Social Responsibility: Toward the Moral Management of Organizational Stakeholders," *Business Horizons* 34, no. 4 (1991): pp. 39–48, DOI: 10.1016/0007-6813(91)90005-G.
10. Ravi Chaudhry, *Capitalism to Peopleism: Inspiring a Leadership Transformation* (New Delhi: Simon & Schuster India, 2024), p. 15. Printed page numbers of the hardcover edition (ISBN 978-81-972789-4-5).
11. European Commission, *A Renewed EU Strategy 2011–14 for Corporate Social Responsibility*, COM(2011) 681 final, October 25, 2011, § 3.1.
12. ISO 26000:2010, *Guidance on Social Responsibility* (Geneva: International Organization for Standardization, 2010).
13. R. Edward Freeman, *Strategic Management: A Stakeholder Approach* (Boston: Pitman, 1984).
14. John Elkington, "Towards the Sustainable Corporation: Win-Win-Win Business Strategies for Sustainable Development," *California Management Review* 36, no. 2 (1994): pp. 90–100, DOI: 10.2307/41165746.
15. John Elkington, *Cannibals with Forks: The Triple Bottom Line of 21st Century Business* (Oxford: Capstone, 1997).
16. John Elkington, "25 Years Ago I Coined the Phrase 'Triple Bottom Line.' Here's Why It's Time to Rethink It," *Harvard Business Review*, June 25, 2018, accessed September 30, 2026, https://hbr.org/2018/06/25-years-ago-i-coined-the-phrase-triple-bottom-line-heres-why-im-giving-up-on-it. Paraphrased.
17. Chaudhry, *Capitalism to Peopleism*, p. 76; the concept is developed in his book *Quest for Exceptional Leadership: Mirage to Reality* (New Delhi: Sage, 2011 and 2016) (note, p. 251).
18. Ethical Markets Media, "Hazel Henderson Bio and Awards" and "Books by Hazel Henderson," accessed September 30, 2026, https://www.ethicalmarkets.com; biography, accessed September 30, 2026, https://www.hazelhenderson.com: born in Great Britain in 1933, died May 22, 2022, "Honorary Member of the Club of Rome," Calvert-Henderson Quality of Life Indicators (2000).
19. Hazel Henderson, *Building a Win-Win World: Life Beyond Global Economic Warfare* (San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler, 1996).
20. Hazel Henderson, *The Politics of the Solar Age: Alternatives to Economics* (New York: Anchor Press/Doubleday, 1981) (the "layer cake" diagram of the total productive system). Paraphrased.
21. Hazel Henderson, Jon Lickerman, and Patrice Flynn, eds., *Calvert-Henderson Quality of Life Indicators: A New Tool for Assessing National Trends* (Bethesda, MD: Calvert Group, 2000).
22. Chaudhry, *Capitalism to Peopleism*, pp. 181–182; note 22, p. 260: "The author is also the co-chair of the EthicMark Awards panel of judges."

23. Michael E. Porter and Mark R. Kramer, "Creating Shared Value," *Harvard Business Review* 89, nos. 1–2 (January–February 2011): pp. 62–77. Paraphrased.
24. Andrew Crane, Guido Palazzo, Laura J. Spence, and Dirk Matten, "Contesting the Value of 'Creating Shared Value,'" *California Management Review* 56, no. 2 (2014): pp. 130–153.
25. Business Roundtable, "Business Roundtable Redefines the Purpose of a Corporation to Promote 'An Economy That Serves All Americans,'" August 19, 2019, accessed September 30, 2026, https://www.businessroundtable.org/business-roundtable-redefines-the-purpose-of-a-corporation-to-promote-an-economy-that-serves-all-americans.
26. Klaus Schwab, "Davos Manifesto 2020: The Universal Purpose of a Company in the Fourth Industrial Revolution," World Economic Forum, December 2, 2019: "The purpose of a company is to engage all its stakeholders in shared and sustained value creation."
27. Lucian A. Bebchuk and Roberto Tallarita, "The Illusory Promise of Stakeholder Governance," *Cornell Law Review* 106 (2020): pp. 91–178.
28. Chaudhry, *Capitalism to Peopleism*, pp. 78–79.
29. John Mackey and Raj Sisodia, *Conscious Capitalism: Liberating the Heroic Spirit of Business* (Boston: Harvard Business Review Press, 2013).
30. Conscious Capitalism, "Philosophy," accessed September 30, 2026, https://www.consciouscapitalism.org/philosophy.
31. United Nations Global Compact et al., *Who Cares Wins: Connecting Financial Markets to a Changing World*, 2004.
32. Directive (EU) 2024/825 of the European Parliament and of the Council of February 28, 2024, amending Directives 2005/29/EC and 2011/83/EU as regards empowering consumers for the green transition, https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/dir/2024/825/oj, art. 4 (transposition by March 27, 2026; application from September 27, 2026).
33. U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission, press release 2025-58, "SEC Votes to End Defense of Climate Disclosure Rules," March 27, 2025, accessed September 30, 2026, https://www.sec.gov/newsroom/press-releases/2025-58.
34. Directive (EU) 2026/470 ("Omnibus I"), *Official Journal of the European Union*, February 26, 2026, in force March 18, 2026; see the summaries cited in chapter 14 (note 11) and chapter 9 (note 54). Thresholds of the revised CSDDD: 5,000 employees and €1.5 billion in revenue, applicable from July 26, 2029.
35. B Lab, "About B Lab," accessed September 30, 2026, https://www.bcorporation.net/en-us/movement/about-b-lab/.
36. B Lab, press releases of March 1, 2025 ("nearly 10,000 Certified B Corporations"), April 8, 2025 (new standards), and July 28, 2025 ("More than 1 million people"), accessed September 30, 2026, https://www.bcorporation.net/en-us/news/press/.
37. Chaudhry, *Capitalism to Peopleism*, p. 196: "Emerging Role of B-Corporations as New Benchmarks"; "Over 95 per cent of B corps are small and medium-sized businesses."
38. Law no. 2019-486 of May 22, 2019, *relative à la croissance et la transformation des entreprises*, which amended arts. 1833 and 1835 of the French Civil Code and created arts. L. 210-10 to L. 210-12 of the French Commercial Code (see also art. R. 210-21 on verification by the independent third-party body; a mission officer is permitted below fifty employees); Service public, "Société à mission," accessed September 30, 2026, https://entreprendre.service-public.gouv.fr/vosdroits/F37408.
39. Chaudhry, *Capitalism to Peopleism*, pp. 196–197.
40. Patagonia, "Earth is now our only shareholder," letter from Yvon Chouinard, September 14, 2022, accessed September 30, 2026, https://www.patagonia.com/ownership/.
41. See in particular David Gelles, "Billionaire No More: Patagonia Founder Gives Away the Company," *New York Times*, September 14, 2022.
42. Ellen MacArthur Foundation, "What we do," accessed September 30, 2026, https://www.ellenmacarthurfoundation.org/about-us/what-we-do.
43. Circle Economy, *The Circularity Gap Report 2025*, accessed September 30, 2026, https://www.circularity-gap.world/2025.
44. Christian Felber, *Die Gemeinwohl-Ökonomie* (Vienna: Deuticke, 2010); Economy for the Common Good, accessed September 30, 2026, https://www.econgood.org.
45. Isabelle Delannoy, *L'Économie symbiotique. Régénérer la planète, l'économie et la société* (Arles: Actes Sud, "Domaine du possible," 2017).
46. John Fullerton, *Regenerative Capitalism: How Universal Principles and Patterns Will Shape Our New Economy*, Capital Institute, April 2015, accessed September 30, 2026, https://capitalinstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/2015-Regenerative-Capitalism-4-20-15-final.pdf, chap. 3, eighth principle, "Seeks Balance": "Being in balance is more than just a nice way to be; it is actually essential to systemic health." Public presentation at Yale University on April 21, 2015.
47. Chaudhry, *Capitalism to Peopleism*, p. 218, citing Fullerton: "aligning our economy with the patterns and principles of a living system."
48. Kate Raworth, *Doughnut Economics: Seven Ways to Think Like a 21st-Century Economist* (London: Random House Business, 2017); French trans. *La Théorie du donut* (Paris: Plon, 2018).
49. Robert F. Kennedy, "Remarks at the University of Kansas," March 18, 1968, John F. Kennedy Presidential Library.
50. Constitution of the Kingdom of Bhutan (2008), Art. 9(2).
51. UNDP, *Human Development Report 1990* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990); UNDP, "Human Development Index," accessed September 30, 2026, https://hdr.undp.org/data-center/human-development-index.
52. Ida Kubiszewski et al., "Beyond GDP: Measuring and Achieving Global Genuine Progress," *Ecological Economics* 93 (2013): pp. 57–68, DOI: 10.1016/j.ecolecon.2013.04.019.

53. Joseph E. Stiglitz, Amartya Sen, and Jean-Paul Fitoussi, *Report by the Commission on the Measurement of Economic Performance and Social Progress* (Paris, 2009).
54. OECD, *Better Life Index* (Better Life Initiative), launched 2011, https://www.oecdbetterlifeindex.org.
55. New Zealand Treasury, *The Wellbeing Budget* 2019, May 30, 2019, accessed September 30, 2026, https://www.treasury.govt.nz/publications/wellbeing-budget/wellbeing-budget-2019.
56. Wellbeing Economy Alliance, "Wellbeing Economy Governments (WEGo)," accessed September 30, 2026, https://weall.org/wego.
57. United Nations General Assembly, resolution A/RES/70/1, *Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, September 25, 2015, para. 18.
58. Leo XIV, Encyclical Letter *Magnifica Humanitas* (May 15, 2026), no. 159, accessed October 16, 2026, https://www.vatican.va/content/leo-xiv/en/encyclicals/documents/20260515-magnifica-humanitas.html.
59. Chaudhry, *Capitalism to Peopleism*, p. 160; on the income of the least well-off 80%, pp. 12 and 161.
60. United Nations, *The Sustainable Development Goals Report* 2025 (New York, 2025): "only 35 per cent of SDG targets are on track or making moderate progress […] 18 per cent are in reverse."
61. Chaudhry, *Capitalism to Peopleism*; FICCI Publishing Awards 2025, category "Business Book of the Year – Business Management." Ravi Chaudhry, "Our economy has been living in an Adam Smith world since 1776. Something different is coming," *Fortune*, March 22, 2026, https://fortune.com/2026/03/22/economy-adam-smith-250th-anniversary-wealth-of-nations-outlook-ai/.
62. Chaudhry, *Capitalism to Peopleism*, p. 6.
63. Ibid., p. 6: "Corporate objectives and societal expectations are like the two tracks of a railway line; they seem to converge in the distance but in reality, they never do."
64. Ibid., pp. 142–143; Chaudhry, "Our economy has been living in an Adam Smith world since 1776," *Fortune*.
65. Chaudhry, *Capitalism to Peopleism*, p. 77.
66. Ibid., p. 15 (see note 10).
67. Ibid., p. 163: "'surge-up' economic growth models as distinct from the 'trickle-down growth' models."
68. Ibid., p. 136; the ABC is developed on pp. 120–136.
69. Ibid., p. 146.
70. Ibid., pp. 64–65 (Raworth), 196–198 (B Corps), 216–218 (Trebeck, Fullerton).
71. Ibid., pp. 113–114.
72. Ibid., p. 218.

PART III

Equiconscism

The theory of conscious balance.

CHAPTER 6

Balance, Consciousness, Movement: What the Sages and the Scientists Teach Us

> *"By changing, it rests."*
>
> — Heraclitus, fragment DK 22 B84a (our translation)

> *"The word does not imply something set and immobile, a stagnation. It means a condition—a condition which may vary, but which is relatively constant."*
>
> — Walter B. Cannon, *The Wisdom of the Body*, 1932, on the word "homeostasis"

Equiconscism did not arise out of nothing. It presents itself as a new theory, but it is rooted in an ancient intuition that philosophers, physiologists, ecologists, sociologists, and psychologists have each formulated in their own language: what lives does not endure by standing still but by constantly adjusting; and that adjustment is all the more right when it is guided by a consciousness able to see, to weigh, and to respond.

This chapter gathers those voices. The aim is not to conscript them in the service of a thesis, nor to fabricate a flattering genealogy. Each author is cited for what they actually wrote, with their limits and their differences. The inheritances are many, and sometimes in tension. But their convergence is striking, and it lays, stone by stone, the foundation of the three notions that form the backbone of Equiconscism: **balance**, **consciousness**, and **dynamic process** (see chapter 7).

A methodological caution is needed from the outset. The great figures of thought attract false quotations the way a lamp attracts moths. Heraclitus, for instance, is credited with sentences he never wrote, such as "Life is a process, not a state" or "Nothing is permanent except change." These formulas are modern. They sum up a Heraclitean idea, but they are not his. We use only verified fragments and texts here, with their references; when a translation is our own, we say so (see also appendix F).

6.1 The Philosophers of Balance and Movement

Heraclitus: The Harmony of Tensions

Heraclitus of Ephesus (c. 540–480 BCE) has come down to us only in fragments, quoted by later authors and collected at the beginning of the twentieth century by Hermann Diels and then Walther Kranz, whose numbering ("DK") remains the standard reference.[1] Four of these fragments shed direct light on our subject.

The first is the most famous, and also the most distorted. Plutarch reports that "you cannot step twice into the same river" (DK B91); another fragment specifies that "on those who step into the same rivers, ever other and other waters flow" (DK B12).[2] The river remains the same river because its water changes: its identity is a form that persists through a flow. The image foreshadows what biology, twenty-five centuries later, would call an open system.

The second fragment speaks of the unity of opposites: people "do not understand how what diverges agrees with itself: a harmony of opposing tensions, as in the bow and the lyre" (DK B51, our translation). The bow shoots only because wood and string pull against each other; the lyre sings only if its strings are taut, neither too much nor too little. Harmony is not the absence of tension: it is tension rightly held.

The third goes further: "the hidden harmony is better than the visible one" (DK B54, our translation). The most solid balance is not always the one that shows.

The fourth, finally, fits into two Greek words, *metaballon anapauetai*: "by changing, it rests" (DK B84a, reported by Plotinus).[3] We placed it as the epigraph because it distills the intuition of this book. The rest of a living being is not a halt; it is a way of changing that does not wear itself out.

Aristotle: Right Measure Is a Summit

Aristotle (384–322 BCE) gave the Western tradition its most precise concept of moral balance: *mesotes*, usually rendered as "the mean" or "due measure." In Book II of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, he defines virtue as "a disposition to act deliberately, consisting in a mean relative to us" (our translation).[4] Courage stands between cowardice and recklessness, generosity between stinginess and prodigality.

Three of Aristotle's clarifications matter for Equiconscism.

First, this mean is "relative to us." Aristotle takes the example of food: if ten minas of food are too much and two too little, it does not follow that six are right for everyone; what is little for the athlete Milo is a great deal for a beginner.[5] The mean is not an arithmetic average: it depends on the person, the moment, and the circumstances. This is the philosophical root of what we will call **differentiated equity** (see chapter 7).

Second, finding the mean is a matter not of calculation but of discernment: it is determined as the person endowed with *phronesis*, practical wisdom, would determine it. Aristotle adds that this is a difficult task—it is easy to miss the target and hard to hit it.

Finally—and this is the point most often forgotten—the mean is not lukewarmness. Aristotle specifies that, with respect to its essence, virtue is a mean, but with respect to excellence and the good, it is a summit (*akrotes*).[6] The mean is not the soft spot between two excesses: it is a ridgeline, narrow and demanding, from which both slopes can be seen. Equiconscism takes this lesson as its own: conscious balance is not the "soft center" (see chapter 7, section 7.12).

Aristotle is also, let us recall, the one who distinguishes *oikonomia*—the management of the household for the sake of the good life, which knows a limit—from chrematistics, the art of endless acquisition (*Politics* I; see chapter 4). The philosopher of right measure is also the first critic of unlimited accumulation.

The *Zhongyong*: A Mean That Adjusts to the Moment

At the other end of the world from Greece, the Confucian tradition formulated a kindred intuition in the *Zhongyong* (中庸), known in English as *The Doctrine of the Mean*—or, more literally, "the practice of the mean"—one of the Four Books, whose text is traditionally attributed to Zisi, grandson of Confucius. Its first chapter distinguishes two states. Before joy, anger, sorrow, and pleasure are aroused, there is the "mean" (*zhong*); when they are aroused and each reaches its right measure, there is "harmony" (*he*). The text concludes: "the mean is the great root of the world; harmony is its universal path. Let the mean and harmony be brought to fulfillment, and heaven and earth find their place, and all beings flourish" (our translation).[7]

The second chapter adds a decisive nuance: the accomplished person "keeps to the mean according to the moment" (*shi zhong*, 時中).[8] The Confucian mean is not a fixed point: it shifts with circumstances. It must be found anew in each situation. We are very close here to the pendulum whose center of oscillation shifts with the context (see chapter 7, section 7.5).

The Buddha: The Middle Way

According to tradition, the Buddha's first teaching, the "Sermon at Benares" (*Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta*, Saṃyutta Nikāya 56.11), opens with the rejection of two extremes: the pursuit of sensual pleasure, judged low and unprofitable, and self-mortification, judged painful and unprofitable. Between the two, the Buddha proposes a "middle way" (*majjhimā paṭipadā*), which gives rise to vision and leads to peace.[9] The middle way is not an average between two errors: it is a third way, born of a clearer gaze. Here we find the link, central to Equiconscism, between right measure and lucidity (see chapter 12).

The Stoics: Discerning What Is Up to Us

The Stoics placed self-mastery and agreement with nature at the heart of wisdom. Epictetus opens his *Handbook* with a distinction both simple and demanding: there are things that are up to us (our judgments, our desires, our actions) and things that are not.[10] This distinction does not preach resignation; it concentrates energy where it can act. It illuminates one feature of conscious balance: not claiming to control everything, but never abandoning the share that is ours. The SALTER guide (SALTER® — *La boussole consciente pour un monde en mutation* [SALTER®: The conscious compass for a changing world]) puts it another way, in a formula quoted in chapter 2: we are not responsible for everything, but we are always responsible for something.[11]

Montaigne and Pascal: Human Measure

In the Renaissance, Montaigne made measure an art of living. At the close of the *Essays*, in the chapter "Of Experience," he writes: "The most beautiful lives are, to my mind, those that conform to the common and human model, with order, but without miracle and without extravagance" (our translation).[12] Nothing heroic here: a good life is a well-adjusted life, without excess.

Pascal, a century later, formulates the symmetrical warning: "Man is neither angel nor beast, and the misfortune is that whoever would play the angel plays the beast" (our translation).[13] Virtuous excess is still excess. Whoever claims to escape the human condition, even for the sake of an ideal, ends up degrading it. Equiconscism draws a practical rule from this: beware of ideals that ignore human floors, as much as of realisms that ignore ceilings.

Spinoza: The Striving to Persevere, and Joy

Baruch Spinoza (1632–1677) offers perhaps the most dynamic philosophy of balance. In the third part of the *Ethics*, he states that "each thing, insofar as it is in itself, strives to persevere in its being" (III, proposition 6, our translation).[14] This striving, the *conatus*, is not passive preservation: it is a power of acting, which increases or diminishes according to one's encounters. Joy is precisely the sign of that increase: "By Joy, then, I shall understand in what follows a passion by which the Mind passes to a greater perfection" (III, 11, scholium, our translation).[15] Sadness is the passage in the opposite direction.

This definition of joy as a *passage*, rather than a state, is crucial. It gives philosophical grounding to Equiconscism's tenth key question ("Joy and Vitality") and to its seventh principle ("recognize joy and vitality as signs of rightness"; see chapter 7). For Spinoza, joy is not a luxury: it is the indication that a relationship, an organization, or a society is increasing the power of acting of those who compose it.

Leibniz: Harmony as Unity in Diversity

Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz (1646–1716), whose "best of all possible worlds" is discussed in chapter 5, proposed a definition of harmony that remains a source of inspiration: from his youth onward, he characterized it as diversity compensated by identity, a unity in variety.[16] Leibnizian harmony does not standardize: it presupposes differences, which it brings into accord. Here we recognize the intuition that conscious balance is not uniformity but the accord of different needs.

Bergson and Whitehead: Thinking Becoming

In the twentieth century, two philosophers made movement the primary reality. Henri Bergson contrasts the measured time of clocks with lived "duration" (*Essai sur les données immédiates de la conscience*, 1889—published in English as *Time and Free Will*) and describes life as a creative "élan" that invents new forms (*L'Évolution créatrice*, 1907—*Creative Evolution*).[17] Alfred North Whitehead, in *Process and Reality* (1929), argues that reality is made not of things but of events, of "occasions" that arise, connect, and carry forward: this is "process philosophy."[18] For both, what is stable is a moment of becoming, not its opposite. Equiconscism inherits this reversal: balance is not a state to be reached but a process to be sustained.

6.2 The Philosophers of Consciousness and Responsibility

Delphi: Know Yourself, and Nothing in Excess

On the temple of Apollo at Delphi, tradition holds, several maxims were inscribed, two of which are attested by Plato: *gnōthi seauton*, "know thyself," and *mēden agan*, "nothing in excess."[19] A continuation is often added—"… and you will know the universe and the gods"—which is a modern addition with no ancient basis; we set it aside. The two authentic maxims suffice: from the very beginning, they bind self-awareness to measure. To know oneself is to know one's limits; to respect measure, one must know where one stands.

Husserl: Consciousness Is Always Consciousness of Something

The phenomenology of Edmund Husserl (1859–1938) placed the notion of intentionality at its center: consciousness is not a closed box; it is always turned toward something—directed at an object, at another person, at the world.[20] This simple idea has practical reach: to be conscious is not to withdraw into oneself but to orient oneself. Hence the three interlocking senses that Equiconscism gives to the word "conscious": self-awareness, awareness of others and of the world, and moral conscience (see chapter 7).

Hans Jonas: Responsibility in the Age of Technological Power

No philosopher saw more clearly than Hans Jonas (1903–1993) the imbalance peculiar to our era: the power of human action has grown infinitely faster than our capacity to foresee its effects. In *The Imperative of Responsibility* (1979), he proposes a new imperative suited to a humanity capable of jeopardizing the very conditions of its existence: "Act so that the effects of your action are compatible with the permanence of genuine human life."[21]

This imperative has three features of direct interest to Equiconscism. It bears on **effects**, not on intentions alone: it obliges us to look at distant consequences. It includes **those absent**, those not yet born, who cannot protest. And it sets a nonnegotiable **floor**: the permanence of genuine human life. Widening the gaze to "those involved, those affected, and those absent," at the heart of Equiconscism, is its direct extension (see chapter 7, section 7.7).

Levinas and Buber: The Face and the Relation

Emmanuel Levinas (1906–1995) grounds ethics in the encounter with the face of the other, which calls out to me and makes me responsible before any calculation (*Totality and Infinity*, 1961).[22] Martin Buber (1878–1965) distinguishes two attitudes: the "I-It" relation, in which the other becomes an object, and the "I-Thou" relation, in which the other is met as a person (*I and Thou*, 1923).[23] Both remind us that moral conscience is born in relationship. An organization that sees only "resources," "targets," or "costs" has left the I-Thou relation behind; conscious balance begins when it finds faces again.

Hannah Arendt: Thinking, Judging, Beginning

Hannah Arendt (1906–1975) showed that evil can arise from thoughtlessness rather than wickedness, and she made judgment—the capacity to represent to oneself the standpoint of others—an essential political faculty. She also coined the notion of "natality": because every human being is a newcomer, each can begin something unforeseen (*The Human Condition*, 1958);[24] chapter 3 (section 3.6) quotes its most powerful formulation. Natality is the philosophical antidote to fatalism. It echoes the rejection, shared by the SALTER guide and by Equiconscism, of fatalism and naive idealism alike (see chapter 2).[25]

Paul Ricœur: The Good Life, with and for Others, in Just Institutions

Paul Ricœur (1913–2005) gave a definition of ethics that seems written to link the levels of Equiconscism. In *Oneself as Another* (1990), he defines "ethical intention" as "aiming at the 'good life' with and for others, in just institutions."[26] Three terms, three levels: the good life (the person), with and for others (the relationship), in just institutions (the organization, the polity). None can be sacrificed. A good life that ignores others becomes selfishness; care without just institutions

remains fragile; just institutions without the aim of a good life become mechanical. Equiconscism's linking of the micro, meso, and macro levels (see chapter 7, section 7.10) finds here its clearest philosophical formulation.

Simone Weil: Attention

Simone Weil (1909–1943) made attention the key to moral and intellectual life. In her "Reflections on the Right Use of School Studies" (1942), she writes: "Attention consists in suspending one's thought, leaving it available, empty, and penetrable to the object" (our translation).[27] And, further on: "The unfortunate need nothing else in this world but people capable of paying attention to them" (our translation). In a 1942 letter to the poet Joë Bousquet, she sums it up: "Attention is the rarest and purest form of generosity" (our translation).[28]

Suspending one's thought, making oneself available: this is exactly what Equiconscism calls "listening" and "knowing when to be silent," the last two of the five gestures of widening the gaze (see chapter 7). In an economy that captures attention in order to sell it (see chapter 1), Simone Weil reminds us that attention is first of all a gift.

Edgar Morin: Complex Thought and *Reliance*

Edgar Morin (born 1921) devoted *La Méthode* (*Method*, six volumes, 1977–2004) to a "complex thought" capable of connecting what the disciplines keep apart. He made his own the word *reliance*—a French sociological term, unrelated to the English word for dependence—which the Belgian sociologist Marcel Bolle de Bal had developed into a concept designating the act of linking and binding together, of connecting things and connecting oneself.[29] Morin insists on the recursive loop—the whole acts on the parts, which act on the whole—and on consciousness as the capacity for reflexivity. Equiconscism borrows the idea of *reliance* from him and makes it operational: linking the levels, and the threefold connection—to oneself, to others, to nature.

6.3 The Life Sciences and Dynamic Balance

The life sciences bring to the intuitions of the sages what no maxim can provide: observable mechanisms. For a century and a half they have shown that the balance of living beings is an active balance, one that maintains itself by consuming energy and by constantly correcting its deviations.

Claude Bernard and Walter Cannon: From the *Milieu Intérieur* to Homeostasis

The French physiologist Claude Bernard (1813–1878) observed that complex organisms keep the composition of their *milieu intérieur*, or internal environment—blood, interstitial fluids—constant despite variations in the external environment. From this he drew a formula that has remained famous: "the fixity of the internal environment is the condition of free life" (our translation).[30] A fruitful paradox: it is because the interior is regulated that the animal can move freely in a changing world.

The American physiologist Walter B. Cannon (1871–1945) named this phenomenon "homeostasis" (1926), then developed it in *The Wisdom of the Body* (1932). He took care to specify that the word designates not stagnation but "a condition which may vary, but which is relatively con-

stant."[31] Body temperature, blood sugar, and blood pH oscillate within narrow bounds; below or beyond them, life is threatened. Here, inscribed in our physiology, is the model of the **corridor**: a floor, a ceiling, and continuous regulation between the two.

Allostasis: Stability Through Change

In 1988 Peter Sterling and Joseph Eyer proposed the concept of "allostasis": the organism does not merely return to fixed values; it anticipates and adjusts its set points according to foreseeable needs—what has been called "stability through change."[32] The body of a person preparing to run raises its heart rate before the effort. But this capacity has a price: when demands become chronic, "allostatic load" accumulates and wears the organism down (Bruce McEwen). Allostasis illuminates two features of conscious balance: it is **anticipatory** (it does not merely react), and it has **costs** (a system pushed without respite exhausts itself, as the data on occupational burnout confirm; see chapter 10).

Bertalanffy and Prigogine: Open Systems, Far from Equilibrium

The Austrian biologist Ludwig von Bertalanffy (1901–1972) showed that organisms are "open systems" that continuously exchange matter and energy with their environment and maintain themselves in a dynamic "steady state," very different from the equilibrium of a closed system; from this he developed a *General System Theory* (1968).[33]

The Belgian physical chemist Ilya Prigogine (1917–2003) received the 1977 Nobel Prize in Chemistry "for his contributions to non-equilibrium thermodynamics, particularly the theory of dissipative structures."[34] He showed that, far from thermodynamic equilibrium, flows of energy can cause order to appear spontaneously: vortices, chemical oscillations, organized forms. Life is the most accomplished example. A point of vocabulary is essential here. In thermodynamics, "equilibrium" designates the state in which all net flow has ceased—for an organism, that is death. **Conscious balance** is not that kind of equilibrium: it is a dynamic regime, sustained by flows, that maintains itself *far* from immobility. Neoclassical economics borrowed a static concept of equilibrium from mechanics (see chapter 4); Equiconscism borrows a dynamic concept of balance from the living world.

> **FOCUS** **Three "Balances" Not to Be Confused**
>
> **Thermodynamic equilibrium**: the state in which all net flow has ceased. For an organism, it is death. Living beings hold themselves *far* from this equilibrium (Prigogine). **The economists' general equilibrium** (Walras, 1874): a state in which supply and demand are equal in all markets. It is a powerful analytical tool, but a static one: it describes a point of rest and leaves aside flows of matter, energy, and meaning (see chapter 4). **The balance of power**, or "of terror": a power relationship frozen by deterrence. *Magnifica Humanitas* specifically warns that "the mentality of armed equilibrium and deterrence appears to be reasserting itself" (no. 204). **Conscious balance** is none of the three. It is a dynamic regime, sustained by flows and feedback, oscillating within a corridor of right measure, and regulated by a consciousness that sees, weighs, and responds. It is a balance of care and rightness, not of rest or deterrence.

Wiener and Ashby: Feedback and Requisite Variety

Cybernetics, founded by Norbert Wiener (*Cybernetics*, 1948), studies "control and communication in the animal and the machine." Its central concept is feedback: a system observes the gap between its state and its goal and corrects its action accordingly. Negative feedback stabilizes (the thermostat); positive feedback amplifies (a stock market panic, runaway climate change).[35]

The British psychiatrist and cybernetician W. Ross Ashby formulated in 1956 the "law of requisite variety," summed up in his formula "only variety can destroy variety"—that is, only variety can absorb variety.[36] A regulator can master a situation only if it has as many possible responses as the situation presents disturbances. The direct consequence for Equiconscism: in the face of a diverse reality, a uniform rule fails. Differentiated responses are needed, and therefore regulation close to the ground—this is the cybernetic justification for **differentiated equity** and **subsidiarity**.

Gregory Bateson: No Value Should Be Maximized

The anthropologist and epistemologist Gregory Bateson (1904–1980) carried cybernetics over into the ecology of mind (*Steps to an Ecology of Mind*, 1972). In *Mind and Nature* (1979), he states a principle that could serve as the motto of this entire book: "There are no monotone 'values' in biology"—there is no value in biology for which "more" is always "better." For everything, he explains, there is an optimal quantity; beyond it, the variable becomes toxic; below it, there is deprivation.[37] Calcium, oxygen, and sleep, but also money, speed, and growth, obey this law.

Here Bateson gives, in a single sentence, the double boundary of the **corridor of right measure**: a floor (below it, deprivation) and a ceiling (beyond it, toxicity). He also draws from it a warning against purposive thinking that maximizes a single variable while ignoring the loops of the system: this, in his view, is the source of many ecological crises.

Maturana and Varela: Autopoiesis

The Chilean biologists Humberto Maturana and Francisco Varela defined living beings by "autopoiesis": an organism is a system that continuously produces the components that produce it (1972; *The Tree of Knowledge*, 1984).[38] It remains itself by constantly renewing itself. They also emphasized "structural coupling": the organism and its environment transform each other. Here we find Heraclitus's river again, this time in biological language.

Antonio Damasio: Homeostasis and Feelings

The neuroscientist Antonio Damasio links homeostasis to affective life. In *Descartes' Error* (1994), he shows that emotions and bodily signals—"somatic markers"—take part in rational decisions instead of disrupting them. In *The Strange Order of Things* (2017), he argues that feelings are the mental expression of the homeostatic state: they tell us whether life is going well or badly, and they prompt us to correct course.[39] For Equiconscism, this is an important scientific confirmation. The consciousness that regulates is not pure calculating reason; it integrates the signals of the body and the emotions—fatigue, unease, joy—as information about balance.

C. S. Holling: Resilience and the Adaptive Cycle

The Canadian ecologist Crawford S. Holling (1930–2019) introduced in 1973 a decisive distinction between two properties of ecosystems. **Stability** is "the ability of a system to return to an equilibrium state after a temporary disturbance." **Resilience**, by contrast, "determines the persistence of

relationships within a system" and measures its ability to absorb changes "and still persist."[40] A highly stable system can be poorly resilient: optimized for a single state, it collapses at the first out-of-range shock. A forest managed as a productive monoculture, a just-in-time supply chain, and an organization that has eliminated every reserve are examples.

With Lance Gunderson, Holling went on to propose the model of the **adaptive cycle** and of **panarchy** (*Panarchy*, 2002), already mentioned in chapter 3.[41] Living and social systems pass through four phases: a phase of exploitation and growth (r), a conservation phase in which resources accumulate and the system grows rigid (K), a release phase, often abrupt (Ω), and then a reorganization phase in which new combinations become possible (α). These cycles are nested across several scales, from the small and fast to the large and slow. The model gives a cautious scientific basis to the cyclical readings of history presented in chapter 3: not fatal laws, but recurring dynamics whose reorganization phase remains open to our choices. It also connects with the sixth key question ("Timing and Cycles"): knowing where one stands in the cycle changes what is right to do.

The Pendulum: A Physics of Balance in Motion

Finally, the most elementary physics provides the central image of Equiconscism. A real pendulum is a **damped** oscillator: friction makes it lose a little energy with each swing. If it is overdamped, it returns to the vertical without oscillating and comes to rest; if it is **forced** at the right rhythm, it can enter into **resonance**, and its amplitude can grow sharply—sometimes to the breaking point, if nothing damps it. Between the two, a pendulum clock works because a mechanism, the escapement, gives it a small impulse at each oscillation, at just the right moment. Chapter 7 (section 7.5) develops this physics as a rigorous metaphor for conscious regulation.

6.4 The Human and Social Sciences: The Balance of Bonds

The human sciences show that societies, like organisms, maintain themselves through regulation —and fall into disorder when that regulation collapses.

Émile Durkheim (1858–1917) gave the name "anomie" to the condition of a society whose rules no longer manage to set bounds to desires. In *Suicide* (1897), he shows that the deregulation of aspirations, in times of crisis as in times of sudden prosperity, increases distress: a desire without limit cannot be satisfied.[42] This is the sociological intuition of the **ceiling**: the absence of a bound is not freedom; it is torment.

Norbert Elias (1897–1990) described, in *Über den Prozess der Zivilisation* (1939; in English *The Civilizing Process*), the gradual internalization of constraints: as chains of interdependence lengthen, individuals learn to regulate their affects and to anticipate the effects of their actions on others who are ever more distant.[43] Widening the gaze is, in this sense, the conscious extension of a historical process.

Marcel Mauss (1872–1950) showed in his *Essai sur le don* (1925; in English *The Gift*) that societies rest on a threefold obligation—to give, to receive, and to give back—which weaves the social bond beyond market exchange.[44] The balance of a society is not merely a balance of accounts: it is a circulation of gifts and counter-gifts.

Hartmut Rosa diagnosed "social acceleration" as a pathology of modernity (*Social Acceleration*, 2005), then proposed "resonance"—a relationship to the world in which we are touched and respond, without total mastery—as the criterion of a good life (*Resonance*, 2016).[45] Chapter 1 presented these two notions; the "Resonance" lever of the SALTER guide stands in this line (see chapter 2).

Boris Cyrulnik popularized the concept of psychological resilience in France: the capacity to resume development after trauma, thanks to "resilience tutors"—that is, bonds (*Un merveilleux malheur* [a marvelous misfortune], 1999).[46] Resilience is not a solitary quality; it is woven (see chapter 1, section 1.7).

Axel Honneth (*The Struggle for Recognition*, 1992) shows that identity is built in three spheres of recognition—love, rights, and social esteem—and that their denial produces moral injuries and conflicts.[47] Inclusion, in Equiconscism, is not a courtesy: it is a condition of dignity.

Edward Deci and Richard Ryan established, in their self-determination theory, that well-being and lasting motivation rest on the satisfaction of three basic psychological needs: autonomy, competence, and relatedness.[48] **Aaron Antonovsky** showed that health depends on a "sense of coherence": that the world be comprehensible, manageable, and meaningful (*Unraveling the Mystery of Health*, 1987).[49] These two frameworks shed light on the floors of the social dimension: an organization that deprives its members of autonomy, meaning, or belonging pushes them below the floor, even if it pays them well.

Finally, **Robert Axelrod** showed through computer tournaments (*The Evolution of Cooperation*, 1984) that, in repeated interactions, cooperative strategies—benevolent, but capable of retaliating and of forgiving—prevail over strategies of pure exploitation.[50] Lasting relationships reward measure. Elinor Ostrom confirmed this in the field, by showing how communities manage common resources sustainably through locally adapted rules (see chapters 4 and 10).

> **IN PRACTICE** **Three Questions Drawn from the Human Sciences**
>
> Before assessing the balance of a team, a family, or an organization, three simple questions, drawn from the work of Antonovsky, Deci and Ryan, and Honneth, help determine whether you are above the floors of the social dimension:
>
> 1. **Coherence**: Is what we are living through comprehensible, manageable, and meaningful for each of us?
> 2. **Basic needs**: Does everyone have a measure of autonomy, the chance to exercise their competence, and a sense of belonging?
> 3. **Recognition**: Who here is neither seen, nor heard, nor valued for their contribution? A negative answer to any one of these questions signals a breached floor—even when the economic indicators are good. These questions prepare the ground for the fourth key question, "Inclusion and Listening" (see chapter 8).

6.5 What These Convergences Ground

From the fragments of Heraclitus to Holling's models, from the maxims of Delphi to Axelrod's tournaments, the voices gathered here come from different centuries, continents, and disciplines. They do not all say the same thing, and some are at odds on essentials: the Buddha and Spinoza

do not share the same idea of desire; Jonas and Bergson do not share the same idea of progress. But on balance, consciousness, and movement, they converge. Five convergences ground Equiconscism.

(a) Living balance is dynamic. Heraclitus's river, the *shi zhong* of the *Zhongyong*, Bergson's duration, Whitehead's process, Cannon's homeostasis, Prigogine's dissipative structures, and Maturana and Varela's autopoiesis all say the same thing: what lives maintains itself by changing. A frozen balance is not a living balance; it is a standstill. Hence the first principle of Equiconscism: movement rather than state.

(b) It is regulated by feedback and by consciousness. The cybernetics of Wiener and Ashby describes loops of correction; Damasio shows that feelings are part of them; Aristotle and the *Zhongyong* remind us that the mean is *discerned*; Simone Weil and Husserl describe consciousness as attention turned toward the world; Jonas makes it a responsibility. In human beings, the finest regulation is conscious: it sees, weighs, corrects, and responds. This is the "hand" that holds the pendulum (see chapter 7).

(c) It is situated and differentiated. Aristotle's mean is "relative to us"; the Confucian mean is held "according to the moment"; the law of requisite variety rules out uniform regulation; Leibniz's harmony brings differences into accord. None of these thinkers confuses balance with arithmetic equality. This is the foundation of **differentiated equity**.

(d) It links the inner and the outer. Claude Bernard links the regulation of the internal environment to freedom in the world; Delphi links self-knowledge to measure; Ricœur links the good life to others and to just institutions; Elias links self-control to chains of interdependence; Deci and Ryan link well-being to belonging. The balance of a person, of an organization, and of a society cannot be thought of separately: this is linking the levels, and the second key question ("Inner / Outer Balance").

(e) It is impoverished when a single variable is maximized. Bateson states this in biological terms, Holling in ecological terms (optimizing for a single state destroys resilience), Durkheim in sociological terms (boundless desire produces anomie), and Aristotle in economic terms (limitless chrematistics). *Magnifica Humanitas* says so as well, in its own language, when it observes that "even unchecked growth can give rise to impoverishment" (no. 113, quoted in chapters 1 and 7).[51] Hence the second principle of Equiconscism: right measure rather than the maximum.

These five convergences do not prove Equiconscism: a theory of action cannot be demonstrated like a theorem. But they show that it rests neither on an isolated intuition nor on a particular belief. It brings together what independent wisdom traditions and scientific disciplines have established, each in its own way, and draws a method from them. That is the subject of chapter 7.

In Brief

- The intuition of a balance in motion runs through the wisdom traditions and the sciences: from Heraclitus ("by changing, it rests") to the *Zhongyong*, from the Buddha to Spinoza, from Bergson to Whitehead.
- Aristotle gave us the concept of right measure (*mesotes*): relative to the person, discerned by practical wisdom, and a summit rather than a lukewarm compromise.

- Jonas, Ricœur, Weil, Levinas, Buber, Arendt, and Morin ground the conscious dimension: responsibility toward those absent, the good life with others in just institutions, attention, relationship, and *reliance*.
- The life sciences describe active balances: homeostasis (Bernard, Cannon), allostasis, open systems (Bertalanffy), order far from equilibrium (Prigogine), feedback and requisite variety (Wiener, Ashby), resilience and the adaptive cycle (Holling).
- Bateson sums up the double boundary of the corridor: below the optimum, deprivation; beyond it, toxicity.
- The social sciences (Durkheim, Elias, Mauss, Rosa, Cyrulnik, Honneth, Deci and Ryan, Antonovsky, Axelrod) show that societies hold together through regulation, gifts, recognition, and cooperation.
- Five convergences ground Equiconscism: living balance is dynamic; it is regulated by feedback and consciousness; it is situated and differentiated; it links the inner and the outer; it is impoverished when a single variable is maximized.

Notes

1. Hermann Diels and Walther Kranz, *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*, 6th ed. (Berlin: Weidmann, 1951–1952), chap. 22 (Heraclitus). Standard French translations: Marcel Conche, *Héraclite. Fragments* (Paris: PUF, 1986); Jean-François Pradeau, *Héraclite. Fragments* (Paris: GF-Flammarion, 2002).
2. Heraclitus, DK 22 B91 (Plutarch, *On the E at Delphi*, 392b) and DK 22 B12 (Arius Didymus, via Eusebius), our translation. The familiar formula "you never step into the same river twice" derives from the paraphrase that Plato attributes to Heraclitus (*Cratylus*, 402a: one could not step twice into the same river).
3. Heraclitus, DK 22 B84a (Plotinus, *Enneads* IV, 8, 1), our translation of the Greek *metaballon anapauetai*.
4. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, II, 6, 1106b36, quoted from the French translation by Jules Tricot (*Éthique à Nicomaque*, Paris: Vrin, 1959); our translation.
5. Ibid., II, 6, 1106a36–b7 (the example of Milo of Croton), paraphrase.
6. Ibid., II, 6, 1107a6–8, our translation (Greek *mesotes / akrotes*).
7. *Zhongyong* (*Liji*, chap. 31), chap. 1: "中也者，天下之大本也；和也者，天下之達道也。致中和，天地位焉，萬物育焉。" Our translation; cf. James Legge, *The Chinese Classics*, vol. I, *The Doctrine of the Mean* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1893); online text, accessed September 30, 2026, https://chinesenotes.com/liji/liji031.html.
8. *Zhongyong*, chap. 2: "君子而時中," our translation. Legge translates "always maintains the Mean"; *shi* means "the moment, the opportune time."
9. *Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta*, Saṃyutta Nikāya 56.11, paraphrase; English translation: Bhikkhu Bodhi, *The Connected Discourses of the Buddha* (Boston: Wisdom, 2000).
10. Epictetus, *Handbook* (*Enchiridion*), 1, 1, paraphrase.
11. David Fiorucci, SALTER® — *La boussole consciente pour un monde en mutation* (Biel/Bienne: LP3 AG / SA, 2026), chap. 9 (Evasion → Responsibility).
12. Michel de Montaigne, *Essais*, III, 13, "De l'expérience" (Villey-Saulnier ed., Paris: PUF, 1965).
13. Blaise Pascal, *Pensées*, Lafuma 678, Brunschvicg 358, Sellier 557.
14. Baruch Spinoza, *Éthique*, III, proposition 6, French trans. Charles Appuhn (Paris: Garnier, 1913); our translation.
15. Ibid., III, proposition 11, scholium, trans. Appuhn; our translation.
16. Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz: harmony as *diversitas identitate compensata*, a formula present as early as 1671 (*Elementa juris naturalis*; letter to Arnauld, GP I, 73) and in the *Confessio philosophi* (1672–1673), paraphrase; see Thomas Leinkauf, "Diversitas identitate compensata. Ein Grundtheorem in Leibniz' Denken," University of Münster, online text, accessed September 30, 2026, https://www.uni-muenster.de/Leibniz/leinkauf/9_diversitas_identitate.pdf.
17. Henri Bergson, *Essai sur les données immédiates de la conscience* (Paris: Alcan, 1889); *L'Évolution créatrice* (Paris: Alcan, 1907).
18. Alfred North Whitehead, *Process and Reality* (New York: Macmillan, 1929); French trans. *Procès et réalité* (Paris: Gallimard, 1995).
19. Plato, *Protagoras*, 343b; see also *Charmides*, 164d–165a.
20. Edmund Husserl, *Méditations cartésiennes* (lectures of 1929), trans. Gabrielle Peiffer and Emmanuel Levinas (Paris: Armand Colin, 1931; repr. Paris: Vrin, 1947), § 14, paraphrase.

21. Hans Jonas, *Le Principe responsabilité. Une éthique pour la civilisation technologique* (1979), trans. Jean Greisch (Paris: Cerf, "Passages" series, 1990; repr. Paris: Flammarion, "Champs" series, no. 402, 1998). English wording quoted from Hans Jonas, *The Imperative of Responsibility: In Search of an Ethics for the Technological Age* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), p. 11.
22. Emmanuel Levinas, *Totalité et infini. Essai sur l'extériorité* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1961).
23. Martin Buber, *Ich und Du* (Leipzig: Insel, 1923); French trans. *Je et Tu* (Paris: Aubier, 1938).
24. Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958); French trans. *Condition de l'homme moderne* (Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 1961). On thoughtlessness: *Eichmann in Jerusalem* (New York: Viking, 1963; French trans. *Eichmann à Jérusalem*, Paris: Gallimard, 1966). On judgment: *The Life of the Mind* (1978, posthumous; French trans. *La Vie de l'esprit*, PUF, 1981) and *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy* (1982, posthumous; French trans. *Juger*, Seuil, 1991).
25. Fiorucci, SALTER®, chap. 20, "Le dénominateur commun: l'équilibre conscient."
26. Paul Ricœur, *Soi-même comme un autre* (Paris: Seuil, 1990), seventh study, p. 202. English wording quoted from Paul Ricœur, *Oneself as Another*, trans. Kathleen Blamey (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), p. 172.
27. Simone Weil, "Réflexions sur le bon usage des études scolaires en vue de l'amour de Dieu" (1942), in *Attente de Dieu* (Paris: La Colombe, 1950).
28. Simone Weil, letter to Joë Bousquet (exchanges of April–May 1942), in Simone Weil and Joë Bousquet, *Correspondance* (Lausanne: L'Âge d'Homme, "Le Bruit du temps" series, 1982).
29. Edgar Morin, *La Méthode*, 6 vols. (Paris: Seuil, 1977–2004); on *reliance*: *La Méthode 6. Éthique*, 2004. On the emergence of the word and its sociological conceptualization, see M. Bolle de Bal, "Reliance, déliance, liance: émergence de trois notions sociologiques," *Sociétés*, no. 80 (2003/2), p. 99 ff., DOI: 10.3917/soc.080.0099.
30. Claude Bernard, *Leçons sur les phénomènes de la vie communs aux animaux et aux végétaux*, vol. I (Paris: J.-B. Baillière, 1878).
31. Walter B. Cannon, *The Wisdom of the Body* (New York: Norton, 1932), p. 24. First use of the term: W. B. Cannon, "Physiological regulation of normal states: some tentative postulates concerning biological homeostatics," in A. Pettit (ed.), *À Charles Richet: ses amis, ses collègues, ses élèves* (Paris: Éditions médicales, 1926).
32. Peter Sterling and Joseph Eyer, "Allostasis: a new paradigm to explain arousal pathology," in S. Fisher and J. Reason (eds.), *Handbook of Life Stress, Cognition, and Health* (New York: Wiley, 1988), pp. 629–649. Bruce S. McEwen, "Protective and damaging effects of stress mediators," *New England Journal of Medicine* 338, no. 3 (1998): pp. 171–179.
33. Ludwig von Bertalanffy, "The theory of open systems in physics and biology," *Science* 111 (1950); *General System Theory* (New York: Braziller, 1968).
34. Nobel Foundation, "The Nobel Prize in Chemistry 1977," accessed September 30, 2026, https://www.nobelprize.org/prizes/chemistry/1977/summary/. See Ilya Prigogine and Isabelle Stengers, *La Nouvelle Alliance* (Paris: Gallimard, 1979).
35. Norbert Wiener, *Cybernetics, or Control and Communication in the Animal and the Machine* (Paris: Hermann; Cambridge, MA: The Technology Press; New York: Wiley, 1948).
36. W. Ross Ashby, *An Introduction to Cybernetics* (London: Chapman & Hall, 1956), p. 207.
37. Gregory Bateson, *Mind and Nature: A Necessary Unity* (New York: Dutton, 1979), chap. II; French trans. *La Nature et la Pensée* (Paris: Seuil, 1984).
38. Humberto Maturana and Francisco Varela, *De máquinas y seres vivos* (Santiago: Editorial Universitaria, 1972); *L'Arbre de la connaissance* (Paris: Addison-Wesley France, 1994) (Spanish original *El árbol del conocimiento*, 1984; English trans. 1987).
39. Antonio R. Damasio, *L'Erreur de Descartes* (Paris: Odile Jacob, 1995; orig. 1994); *L'Ordre étrange des choses. La vie, les sentiments et la fabrique de la culture* (Paris: Odile Jacob, 2017).
40. C. S. Holling, "Resilience and Stability of Ecological Systems," *Annual Review of Ecology and Systematics* 4 (1973): pp. 1–23, here p. 17.
41. Lance H. Gunderson and C. S. Holling (eds.), *Panarchy: Understanding Transformations in Human and Natural Systems* (Washington: Island Press, 2002).
42. Émile Durkheim, *Le Suicide. Étude de sociologie* (Paris: Alcan, 1897), book II, chap. 5; see also *De la division du travail social*, 1893.
43. Norbert Elias, *Über den Prozess der Zivilisation* (Basel: Haus zum Falken, 1939); French trans. *La Civilisation des mœurs* (1973) and *La Dynamique de l'Occident* (1975) (Paris: Calmann-Lévy).
44. Marcel Mauss, "Essai sur le don. Forme et raison de l'échange dans les sociétés archaïques," *L'Année sociologique*, new series, vol. 1, 1923–1924 (published 1925).
45. Hartmut Rosa, *Accélération. Une critique sociale du temps* (Paris: La Découverte, 2010; orig. 2005); *Résonance. Une sociologie de la relation au monde* (Paris: La Découverte, 2018; orig. 2016).
46. Boris Cyrulnik, *Un merveilleux malheur* (Paris: Odile Jacob, 1999).
47. Axel Honneth, *La Lutte pour la reconnaissance* (Paris: Cerf, 2000; orig. 1992).
48. Richard M. Ryan and Edward L. Deci, "Self-determination theory and the facilitation of intrinsic motivation, social development, and well-being," *American Psychologist* 55, no. 1 (2000): pp. 68–78.
49. Aaron Antonovsky, *Unraveling the Mystery of Health: How People Manage Stress and Stay Well* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1987).
50. Robert Axelrod, *The Evolution of Cooperation* (New York: Basic Books, 1984).
51. Leo XIV, Encyclical Letter *Magnifica Humanitas* (May 15, 2026), no. 113, accessed October 16, 2026, https://www.vatican.va/content/leo-xiv/en/encyclicals/documents/20260515-magnifica-humanitas.html.

CHAPTER 7

Equiconscism: Definition, Principles, and Model

> *"Conscious balance is not a state; it is a movement."*
>
> — David Fiorucci

> *"Nothing in excess" (mēden agan).*
>
> — Delphic maxim, reported by Plato, *Protagoras*, 343b

The preceding chapters set out a diagnosis and surveyed an inheritance. The world is out of balance, and that imbalance is, first of all, an imbalance in how we see (chapters 1 to 3). The great economic theories have contributed a great deal, but almost all of them conceived of balance as a state, or sacrificed it to the maximization of a single variable (chapter 4). The attempts at reconciliation sketched desirable destinations without always equipping the road that leads there (chapter 5). Finally, the sages and the scientists converge on one intuition: living balance is dynamic, regulated, situated, and connected, and it grows poorer whenever we maximize (chapter 6).

This chapter presents Equiconscism itself: its name, its definition, its emblem, its three dimensions, its own concepts, its cycle, its seven principles, what it is not, and what it shares with two companion texts. It is the heart of the book. The chapters that follow set out its tools (chapter 8) and its applications (chapters 9 and 10).

7.1 A Name, an Intention

The word *Equiconscism* is a neologism built from three elements.

- ***Aequus***, in Latin, means "equal, fair, just, level." It is found in *aequilibrium*, from *aequus* and *libra*, the scales: balance is, etymologically, a pair of scales held level.
- ***Conscientia*** means "knowing with," shared knowledge. The word gave rise both to moral conscience (that which judges good and evil) and to self-awareness (that which knows what it is living through).
- The suffix **-ism** denotes a doctrine, a current of thought and practice.

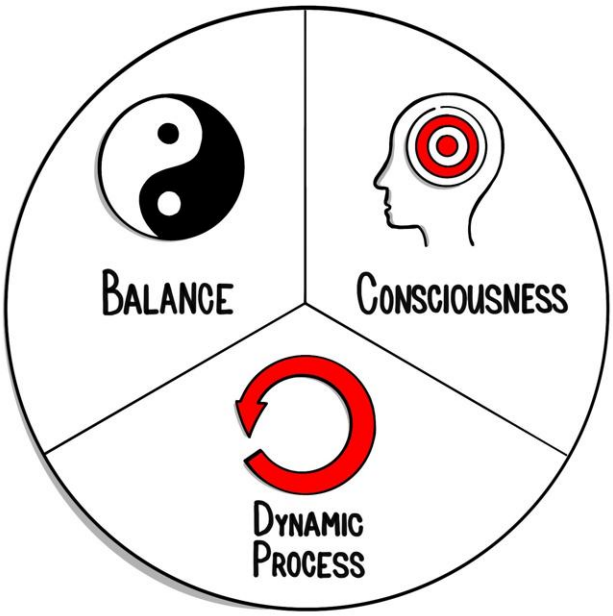
Equiconscism is thus, literally, a thought and practice of just balance, enlightened by shared knowledge. The adjective is *Equiconscist* (an Equiconscist approach, an Equiconscist organization); a person who practices it is an Equiconscist. In French, the word is *Équiconscisme*.

Its genesis is recent and documented. The idea of "conscious balances"—neither blind growth nor punitive degrowth—was first formulated by David Fiorucci in early 2025; the name *Équiconscisme* (Equiconscism) was adopted in February 2025; the theory then matured over 2025–2026 with the ten key questions, the Conscious Path, and the SALTER guide. In his early notes (see chapter 4, section 4.9), the author summed it up this way: neither growth nor degrowth, but conscious balance—and sometimes, too, the art of being content with what one has.

Its motto fits on a single line:

> *"Conscious balance: the art of thriving together, in motion and with measure."*

7.2 The Canonical Definition



Balance, consciousness, dynamic process

FOCUS Definition

Equiconscism is an economic and societal theory of conscious balance. It conceives of balance not as a state to be reached but as a dynamic, continuous, and differentiated process through which people, organizations, and societies constantly adjust their decisions so that the economy, society, and the living world support one another—by consciously widening their gaze to all those, human and non-human, present and yet to come, whom these decisions touch.

Every word of this definition has been weighed. Let us read it slowly.

"An economic and societal theory." Equiconscism speaks of the economy—of production, exchange, and the sharing of value—but it refuses to isolate the economy from the society that carries it and the living world that nourishes it. It is a theory in the sense that it offers an explanation (the world's imbalance arises from an imbalance in how we see) and a method (the cycle of conscious balance). It is not a mathematical model; it is a framework for analysis and action.

"Of conscious balance." The heart of the theory lies in two words, which must be defined separately.

- **Balance** is neither stillness nor arithmetic equality. It is the fruitful, regulated tension between complementary forces; it is maintained through movement: the pendulum, the spinning top, walking, the homeostasis of living beings. It must not be confused with "the balance of power" or "the balance of terror," which are frozen relations of force: conscious balance is a balance of care and rightness, not of deterrence.
- **Conscious** means one who sees, who knows what they are doing and what their action produces, and who answers for it. Three senses are interwoven here: self-awareness (inner lucidity), awareness of others and of the world (attention, listening, empathy, an understanding of interdependence), and moral conscience (discernment of what is right, and responsibility). The word has no mystical sense here.

"Not as a state to be reached but as a dynamic … process." This is the central reversal. A **dynamic process** is a sequence of interactions and feedbacks (regulation loops) in which each adjustment changes the context of the next. Conscious balance is never "achieved once and for all": it is perceived, discerned, adjusted, and passed on, again and again.

The author's favorite image is the **spinning top**. At rest, it falls over. Set spinning, it stands upright, and even rights itself: its stability comes from its rotation. As it slows, it begins to wobble, then collapses. The SALTER guide, in fact, places a full-page photograph of a spinning top in motion just before its closing words.[1] The lesson is simple: a system that stops moving does not gain stability; it loses it.

"Continuous, and differentiated." Continuous, because there is no finish line. Differentiated, because the right point is not the same for everyone: this is **differentiated equity** (section 7.6).

"Through which people, organizations, and societies." Equiconscism addresses every level, from the person to the planet. It acts above all at the level of the person and of organizations, while explicitly linking these to the level of societies (section 7.10).

"Constantly adjust their decisions." Balance cannot be decreed: it is practiced, decision after decision. A family budget, a hiring plan, a municipal regulation, a public policy—each is an act of adjustment.

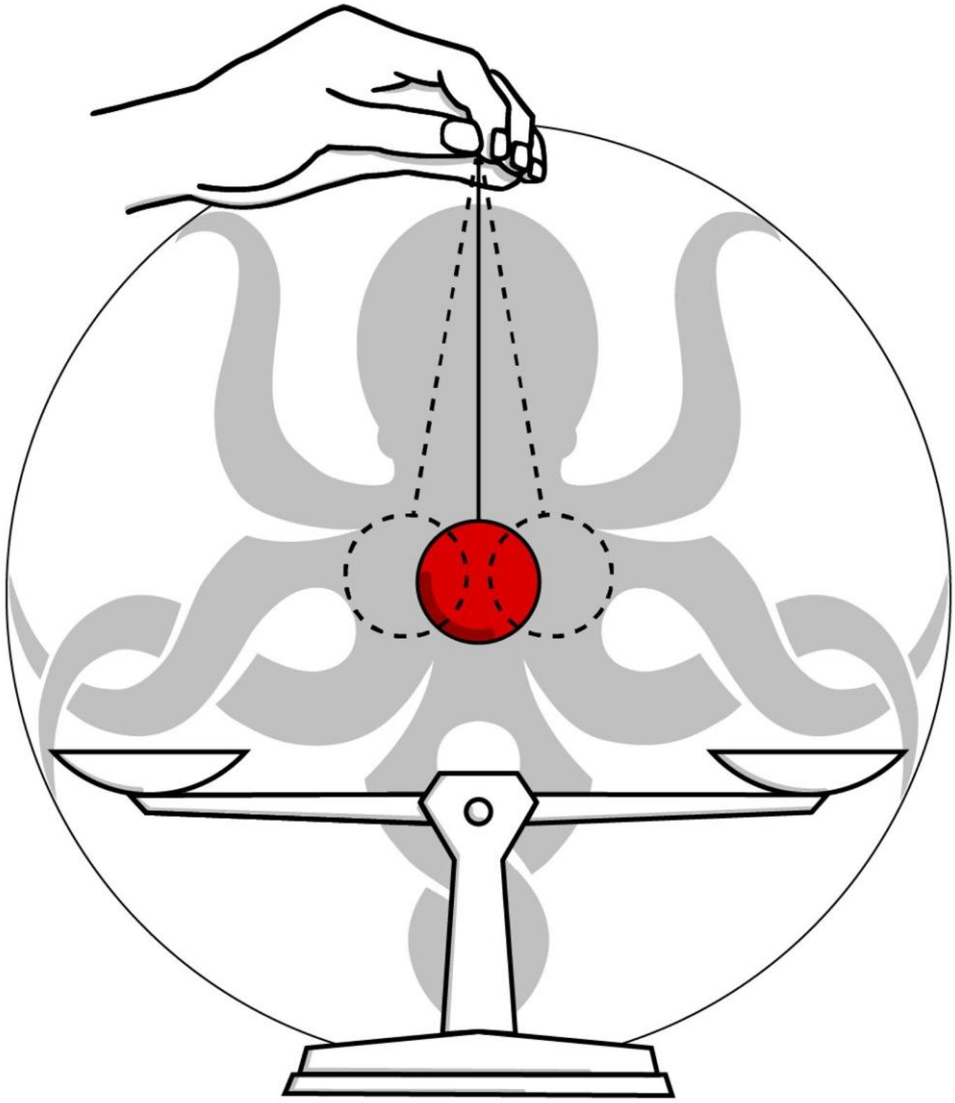
"So that the economy, society, and the living world support one another." The decisive words are "one another." The point is not to arbitrate among three rival interests, nor to sacrifice one in order to save the others, but to seek the decisions in which each strengthens the others: an economy that nourishes society and regenerates the living world; a society that gives meaning to the economy and protects the living world; a respected living world that makes the economy and society sustainable.

"By consciously widening their gaze to all those, human and non-human, present and yet to come, whom these decisions touch." Here is the condition for everything else. Our gaze must extend beyond ourselves (to others), beyond our species (to non-human beings), and beyond the present (to future generations). This is Hans Jonas's imperative made practicable (see chapter 6): a method for seeing those who are absent before deciding (section 7.7).

Another image helps us grasp this definition. The author sometimes gives people a small object: a **wooden ruler** about ten centimeters long and **three black pebbles**, with this instruction: "Place the ruler, play with the three pebbles, find the point where everything holds." Whoever tries it discovers three things. The point of balance exists, but it has to be found through small adjustments. It changes as soon as a pebble is moved. And there is no single arrangement: each configuration has its own right point. The ruler stands for structure and measure; the pebbles, for the weight of realities that differ from one another. It is, in miniature, the whole theory.

Finally, Equiconscism stands on the ridgeline that the SALTER guide calls its "common denominator" (see chapter 2): a path that is neither fatalism nor naive idealism, that welcomes contradictions but refuses powerlessness.[2]

7.3 The Pendulum Emblem



The emblem of Equiconscism: the hand, the pendulum, the scales, the octopus, and the circle

Equiconscism has an emblem. A hand holds a thread; at its end, a red sphere swings; its extreme positions are drawn in dotted lines, and it never reaches them. Below hangs a pair of two-pan scales. In the background, a gray octopus spreads its eight arms. The whole is inscribed in a circle. Each element can be read.

The hand represents human consciousness, individual and collective. It does not freeze the movement; it accompanies it. It holds without gripping: a clenched hand would stop the pendulum; an absent hand would let it run away or die out.

The red sphere represents our decisions, our activity, the economy in motion. Red is the color of life, of energy, of the heart.

The oscillation says that life is movement. A pendulum at rest no longer tells the time. Seeking balance does not mean stopping the movement; it means preventing it from running away.

The dotted lines stand for the extremes that are possible but not desired—excess and deficiency. The oscillation stays within the **corridor of right measure** (section 7.5).

The scales represent weighing, justice, and discernment among needs, interests, and stakeholders. They recall the etymology of the word *balance*.

The octopus represents distributed intelligence and interdependence. It is sometimes said, figuratively, to have "nine brains": a central brain and, in each of its eight arms, a nerve cord studded with ganglia. The zoological reality is more precise, and more striking still: the common octopus has some 500 million neurons, nearly two-thirds of which are located in the arms, which can process a great deal of sensory and motor information locally while remaining coordinated by the central brain.[3] It is a fine figure of organization: each arm acts autonomously, close to the ground, without ever ceasing to belong to a whole. It is also a nod to Octocracy®, the governance approach developed by LP3 AG / SA (section 7.14).

The circle represents unity, wholeness, the living world as a system. What lies within it is connected.

> **FOCUS The Pendulum in One Sentence**
>
> The hand (consciousness) accompanies the sphere (our decisions), which swings (life) without reaching the extremes (the corridor), above a pair of scales (discernment), against the background of a distributed intelligence (the octopus), in a world where everything is connected (the circle).

7.4 The Three Dimensions and the Hand That Links Them

Equiconscism seeks balance among three dimensions, always cited in this order and under these labels.

1. A measured and shared economy. Value creation is in the service of life. This requires quality, durability, and chosen sufficiency; a fair sharing of value among those who create it; and capital conceived as a means and not as an end. "Measured" does not mean "small": an economy can be dynamic, innovative, and prosperous while knowing its measure.

2. An inclusive society built on solidarity. It guarantees dignity, belonging, justice, and participation; it takes differentiated needs into account; it sustains the bonds between generations.

3. A respected and regenerated living world. This is regenerative ecology: respecting planetary boundaries, ecosystems, animals, and common resources (water, air, soils, land), and aiming at regeneration rather than merely reducing damage.

Consciousness is not a fourth dimension: it is **the hand that holds the pendulum**—the capacity that links and regulates the three. An organization can excel in each domain separately—good financial results, a good social climate, a good carbon footprint—and still lack conscious balance if these achievements are built at one another's expense, or if no one sees how they interact. Consciousness is what holds everything together.

This triad echoes an intuition the author calls **the threefold connection**: connection to oneself, to others, and to nature. A measured economy begins with a right relationship to one's own needs; an inclusive society, with a right relationship to others; a regenerated living world, with a right relationship to nature.

Dimension	What It Serves	Sign of Deficiency	Sign of Excess
Measured and shared economy	Value creation in the service of life	Precariousness, underinvestment, bankruptcy	Accumulation, returns that exhaust, concentration
Inclusive society built on solidarity	Dignity, belonging, participation	Exclusion, loneliness, invisibility	Overload, conformism, surveillance
Respected and regenerated living world	The conditions for all life	Degradation of soils, water, species	Extraction beyond renewal

7.5 The Corridor of Right Measure

Floors and Ceilings

For each dimension there is a **floor**—the threshold below which dignity, essential needs, or viability are not secured—and a **ceiling**—the threshold beyond which excess exhausts people, tears the social fabric, or overshoots the limits of the living world. Conscious balance is the regulated oscillation **inside** this corridor.

Gregory Bateson formulated this for living systems: in biology, there is no value of which "more" is always "better"; below the optimum there is deficiency; beyond it, the variable becomes toxic (see chapter 6). The corridor applies this principle to the economy, to society, and to the living world.

The following table gives **examples** of floors and ceilings. They are not universal norms: they are set according to context, through deliberation and, where they exist, by scientific or legal benchmarks.

Dimension	Level	Floor Examples	Ceiling Examples
Measured and shared economy	Person, family	Income covering essential needs; precautionary savings	Debt that exceeds the capacity to repay; consumption that devours time and attention
	Organization	Wages that allow a dignified living; sufficient cash reserves; maintenance investment	A pay gap that stakeholders judge indefensible; return targets that force the exhaustion of teams or suppliers
	Society	Access to essential services; a safety net	Concentration of wealth that captures power; public debt that robs future generations
Inclusive society built on solidarity	Person, family	Sleep, rest, bonds of trust, shared time	Mental load and working hours that destroy health or family life
	Organization	Psychological safety; the right to be heard; accessibility	Intrusive surveillance; pressure to conform; meetings and demands that saturate

Dimension	Level	Floor Examples	Ceiling Examples
	Society	Fundamental rights; access to education and health care; democratic participation	Polarization that makes dialogue impossible; inequalities that tear apart the sense of belonging
Respected and regenerated living world	Person, family	Access to drinking water, clean air, nearby nature	A personal footprint incompatible with shared ecological budgets
	Organization	Compliance with the law, animal welfare, and the health of the soils it works	Extraction beyond the rate of renewal; emissions beyond a trajectory compatible with climate targets
	Society	Protection of the ecosystems that provide water, pollination, fertility	Overshoot of planetary boundaries

FOCUS The Corridor: A Diagram Described

Imagine three horizontal bands stacked one above the other, one per dimension: at the top, a measured and shared economy; in the middle, an inclusive society built on solidarity; at the bottom, a respected and regenerated living world. Each band is bounded by two dotted lines: the ceiling above, the floor below. The horizontal axis is time. In each band, a red curve undulates: it rises, falls back, corrects itself, without ever touching the dotted lines. Wherever a curve approaches a boundary, a small arrow indicates the conscious adjustment that brings it back toward the center. Thin vertical lines connect the three bands: a decision that pushes one curve up often moves the other two as well. The corridor is not a rigid pipe: its width varies with the dimension and the context, and the center of the oscillation can shift over time.

Kinship with—and Difference from—the Doughnut

The corridor extends two traditions. The first is Aristotle's *mesotes*, which places virtue between an excess and a deficiency (chapter 6). The second is the Doughnut of the British economist Kate Raworth (chapter 5): a "safe and just space" for humanity, lying between a **social foundation** (twelve essential needs, from food to political voice) and an **ecological ceiling** (the nine planetary boundaries).[4] This ceiling is not theoretical. According to the *Planetary Health Check* published on September 24, 2025, by the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research, seven of the nine planetary boundaries have now been breached, with ocean acidification joining the danger zone; the 2026 edition, published on September 21, 2026, confirms this finding.[5]

Equiconscism takes up the Doughnut and departs from it on four points. First, it sets a floor **and** a ceiling for **each** dimension, including the economy: an economy can fall short (underinvestment, precariousness) just as it can overflow (speculation, concentration). Second, it applies the corridor **at every level**: not only to the world economy, but to a person, a family, a small or medium-sized enterprise (SME), a municipality. Third, it describes a **dynamic**: one is not "inside" or "outside" the Doughnut once and for all; one oscillates, and one corrects. Fourth, it adds **the consciousness that regulates**: the Doughnut says where we need to be; Equiconscism proposes a way of staying there.

The Physics of the Pendulum: A Rigorous Metaphor

The pendulum is not merely a beautiful image. Its physics sheds precise light on what it means to regulate.

Damping. A real pendulum loses a little energy with each swing, through friction. Physicists distinguish three regimes. Underdamped, it swings for a long time, gradually losing amplitude. At so-called critical damping, it returns to the center as quickly as possible without overshooting it. Overdamped, it creeps toward the vertical and comes to rest there. Transposed: an organization without any brake runs away; an organization straitjacketed by controls grinds to a halt. **Conscious damping** is the kind that reduces the amplitude of excesses without killing the movement.

A pendulum at rest no longer tells the time. A pendulum clock, invented by Christiaan Huygens in 1656 and patented in 1657, works only because a mechanism—the escapement—gives the pendulum a small impulse at each swing, just enough and at just the right moment, to make up for what friction has taken from it.[6] Without that impulse, the pendulum stops and the clock dies. Consciousness plays this role: not a massive push, but a measured, repeated, well-placed contribution. An organization, a family, a democracy left without this upkeep does not fall all at once; it slowly comes to a stop.

Destructive resonance. If a system is pushed at the rhythm of its natural frequency, each push adds to the previous one and the amplitude grows. That is useful on a swing; it is dangerous on a bridge. The Millennium Footbridge in London, opened on June 10, 2000, had to be closed two days later: pedestrians, unconsciously adjusting their stride to the slight sideways sway of the structure, amplified that sway, which in turn pushed them to fall further into step. Dampers had to be installed before it could reopen in February 2002.[7] This is the exact image of a positive feedback loop: financial bubbles, spirals of polarization, runaway climate change. Each person, by reacting "normally" to the movement, amplifies it. Conscious balance consists first in spotting these loops, then in "breaking step."

Forcing. A pendulum can also be shaken from outside, at rhythms it does not choose: economic shocks, pandemics, wars, disasters. This is the polycrisis (chapter 1). External forcing cannot be eliminated; what can be done is to strengthen the system's capacity to absorb it—what Holling calls resilience (chapter 6).

Synchronization. In 1665, Huygens observed that two pendulum clocks hung from the same support ended up swinging in exact antiphase, and he spoke of a "sympathy" between them.[8] Coupled oscillators fall into step with one another. This is the image of connectedness: the balance of a person, of a team, and of an organization influence one another. But the London footbridge is a reminder that synchronization can also produce runaway effects. Conscious connectedness is attunement, not mimicry.

The limits of the metaphor. A pendulum has a single, fixed point of rest. Human systems have several, and their "center" shifts with the context, like the Confucian mean that holds "according to the moment" (chapter 6). The metaphor does not say where the center is; it says how one approaches it and how one avoids running away. That is why Equiconscism pairs it with a method of discernment (section 7.8).

7.6 Differentiated Equity

Not everyone needs the same thing. Conscious balance is not uniformity: it adjusts according to needs, capacities, contexts, cultures, and moments.

This idea has a long history. Aristotle already distinguished "corrective" justice, which restores an arithmetic equality in exchanges, from "distributive" justice, which allocates according to a proportion that takes account of what distinguishes persons.[9] The economist and philosopher Amartya Sen showed that the same resource does not give everyone the same real opportunities: the same income does not offer the same freedom of movement to an able-bodied person and to a wheelchair user. What counts are "capabilities"—that is, what people are actually able to be and to do.[10] Finally, the principle of **subsidiarity** entrusts decisions to the level closest to the people concerned, because that is where needs are best known. Ashby's cybernetics supplies the technical reason: only variety can absorb variety (chapter 6). *Magnifica Humanitas* says it in social terms: "Consequently, no single model of change or universal solution exists, since there are places and situations that require different responses."[11]

A few examples. In a team, an employee caring for a sick parent does not need the same hours as a colleague without family responsibilities; imposing the same framework on her pushes her below the floor. A start-up SME does not have the same room for maneuver as an established group; demanding the same reporting systems of it confuses equity with uniformity. A mountain region does not have the same mobility needs as a metropolitan area.

Differentiated equity nevertheless has two safeguards. First, **shared dignity** is not differentiated: it is owed to everyone, unconditionally. Second, **dignity floors** and **ecological ceilings** are not negotiable in the name of difference. Differentiation concerns means, rhythms, and paths; it justifies neither deprivation nor excess. That is what distinguishes it from relativism (section 7.12).

7.7 Widening the Gaze

The author puts it in a homely phrase: we must "look beyond our own navel." Before deciding, widening the gaze means identifying three circles:

- who and what is **involved**: the actors in the decision;
- who and what is **affected**, directly or indirectly;
- who and what is **absent**: the voiceless—future generations, non-human beings, vulnerable people, distant people.

Ravi Chaudhry describes the same demand with an image: "A 360-degree view excludes; a 720-degree view includes those who are excluded."[12] He adds that the criterion of a good leader is the ability to listen to the views that go unexpressed (see chapter 8, question 4).[13]

Widening the gaze is practiced through **five gestures**:

1. **Opening one's eyes**: seeing beyond one's immediate interest, one's department, one's country, one's era.
2. **Opening one's arms**: welcoming, inviting to the table those who are not there.

3. **Opening one's heart**: letting oneself be touched by what others, human and non-human, are going through.
4. **Listening**: truly receiving what is said, without preparing one's reply while the other person is speaking.
5. **Knowing when to be silent**: making room for others. This is often the hardest, especially for those who are used to speaking.

Simone Weil described this last gesture better than anyone: attention "consists in suspending one's thought, leaving it available, empty, and penetrable to the object" (our translation; chapter 6). Being silent is not self-effacement: it is making room so that the other can exist.

> **IN PRACTICE** **The Map of Those Involved, Affected, and Absent**
>
> Before an important decision, take a sheet of paper and draw three concentric circles. In the center, write down those **involved**: who decides, who carries out, who pays? In the second circle, those **affected**: who will feel the effects, directly or indirectly, here and elsewhere? In the outer circle, those **absent**: who will not be in the room—children, future generations, animals, a river, distant subcontractors, a person who does not speak the language of the meeting? For each absent party, ask one question: who can carry their voice, and how? This map prepares the fourth key question, "Inclusion and Listening" (appendix B, the "Widening the Gaze" worksheet).

7.8 The Cycle of Conscious Balance

The dynamic process of Equiconscism takes the form of a cycle in five movements. It applies at every level: a person reorganizing their time, a team choosing a supplier, a municipality revising its land-use plan.

1. **Perceive** — open your eyes: see the situation, the forces at play, the parties involved and affected, the weak signals.
2. **Listen** — open your arms and your heart, make room, fall silent: welcome every voice, including minority and absent ones.
3. **Discern** — weigh (the scales): differentiated needs, floors and ceilings, short/medium/long term, the ten key questions.
4. **Adjust** — act with measure, correct the amplitude, decide by consent when the decision is collective.
5. **Answer and Pass On** — give an account (accountability), measure, learn, pass on; then the cycle begins again.

This cycle turns the convergences of chapter 6 into a method. Perceive and Listen correspond to the information loop of cybernetics; Discern, to Aristotle's *phronesis*; Adjust, to error correction; Answer and Pass On, to Jonas's responsibility and to learning. Decision by **consent**, in the fourth movement, does not require unanimity: one checks that no reasoned objection remains. This practice comes from sociocracy; it has been taken up, among others, by Octocracy.

IN PRACTICE **The Cycle in Action (Fictional Illustrative Case)**

A twelve-person carpentry workshop receives a very large order that would double its revenue for a year. **Perceive**: the team lists what the order involves (overtime, timber purchases, subcontracting) and what it affects (regular customers, families, the forest the wood comes from). **Listen**: the owner brings the team together, then calls two loyal customers and the local sawmill; an apprentice, silent at first, points out that at this pace he will not be able to attend his classes. **Discern**: the workload ceiling would be exceeded for six months; the apprentice's training floor would no longer be secured; the origin of the wood must be checked. **Adjust**: the company accepts the order over eighteen months instead of twelve, hires someone on a temporary contract, and protects the class days; the decision is made by consent. **Answer and Pass On**: a monthly check-in tracks workload and satisfaction; at the end of the project, the team records what it has learned for the next exceptional order.

7.9 The Seven Principles of Equiconscism

The cycle says *how* to proceed. The seven principles say *by what standard*.

1. Movement rather than state — balance is a process, never something won once and for all. It rests on the first convergence of chapter 6: what lives sustains itself by changing. Practical consequence: no certification, no label, no good result exempts anyone from starting the cycle again.

2. Right measure rather than the maximum — optimize within the corridor; do not maximize a single variable. Maximizing profit, growth, speed, or even a virtue ends up destroying what makes them possible. *Magnifica Humanitas* puts it this way: "[E]ven unchecked growth can give rise to impoverishment. In an ecosystem, balance is disrupted when one species expands at the expense of others."[14]

3. Differentiated equity rather than uniformity — to each according to their needs and capacities, in shared dignity (section 7.6).

4. Widening the gaze — see those involved, those affected, and those absent; human and non-human; today and tomorrow (section 7.7).

5. Linking the levels — from the person to the planet: subsidiarity and solidarity (section 7.10).

6. Regeneration rather than mere preservation — leave people, relationships, and the living world in better shape. Reducing damage is necessary but insufficient: you do not repair a soil by exhausting it a little more slowly. A team whose members come out of a project more skilled and more confident than they went in, a soil whose organic matter is increasing, a neighborhood whose ties have grown denser—these are signs of regeneration.

7. Embraced responsibility — give an account (accountability), and recognize joy and vitality as signs of rightness. Giving an account is not merely being responsible: it is making visible what one has done, what worked, and what failed, before those whom one's actions have touched. And joy, in Spinoza's sense—the passage to a greater power of acting (chapter 6)—is a serious indicator: an organization where no one laughs or gets involved anymore may well have good numbers, but it has lost its balance.

7.10 Linking the Levels: Micro, Meso, Macro

Equiconscism distinguishes three levels:

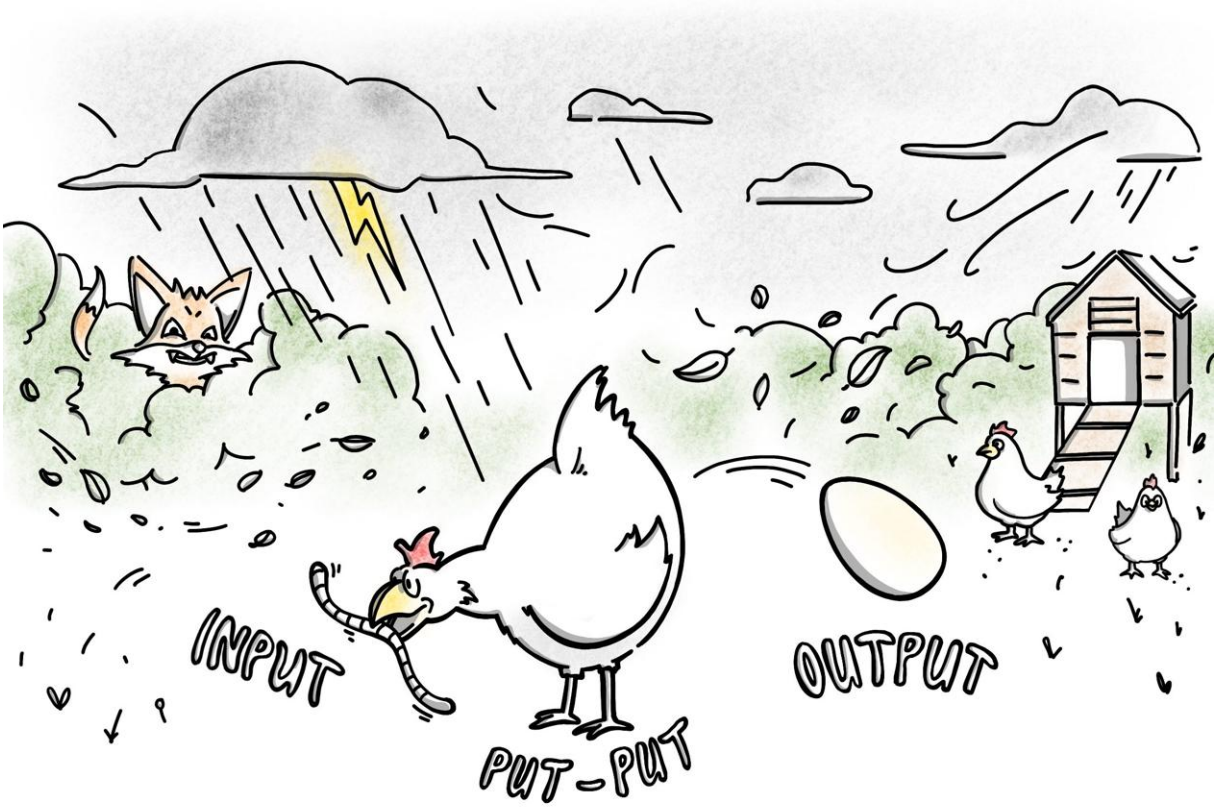
- **micro**: the person, the family;
- **meso**: organizations, municipalities, networks, sectors;
- **macro**: states, international institutions, the world economy.

It acts **above all at the micro and meso levels**, while explicitly linking them to the macro level. This choice is not false modesty. It is at the level of people and organizations that most of the everyday decisions that make up the real economy are taken: buying, hiring, producing, investing, voting at a municipal assembly (town meeting). It is also at this level that the great macro-level orientations are translated—or fail to be translated—into practice.

Two principles govern the relationship between levels. **Subsidiarity**: decide as close as possible to those concerned. **Solidarity**: leave no one outside the corridor. *Magnifica Humanitas* recalls that the two are inseparable: "When subsidiarity is not linked to solidarity, it ends up becoming merely the protection of particular interests; when solidarity is not supported by subsidiarity, it degenerates into a form of welfare that does not foster responsibility."[15]

Ricœur gave its ethical structure: the good life, with and for others, in just institutions (chapter 6). Ravi Chaudhry gives it a holistic formulation, which serves as the epigraph to chapter 9: the part is as much in the whole as the whole is in the part.[16] The image of the octopus says the same thing: autonomous arms, a common body. Chapter 9 sets out conscious balance at each level, from the person to international institutions.

7.11 Input – Put-Put – Output: Reading the Whole Process



Input – Put-Put – Output

One of Equiconscism's illustrations shows a hen. It deserves a closer look, because it corrects a deep-seated reflex of our economies: looking only at the result.

Every activity transforms resources. The **input** is the worm, food, energy, work, attention. The ***put-put*** is the hen's clucking: the living process, the patient, invisible work that takes its time. The **output** is the egg, which nourishes and carries the next life. Around the scene a **storm** rumbles—the polycrisis. A **fox** prowls—predators, risks, temptations to exploit; a nod to Giuliano da Empoli's *L'heure des prédateurs* [The Hour of the Predators] (chapter 1). And there is the **henhouse** and the **community**: refuge, belonging.

The lesson is simple. Conscious balance looks at **the whole process**, not only at the output. An economy that counts only the eggs ends up exhausting the hens, neglecting the henhouse, and forgetting the fox. It confuses yield with vitality. Equiconscism protects the living process and those who carry it: the health of the people who work, the quality of relationships, the right rhythm, the safety of the refuge. It also asks where the worm comes from—the supply chain—and what becomes of the egg.

7.12 What Equiconscism Is Not

A theory is also defined by what it rejects.

- **Not a partisan ideology.** Equiconscism lines up neither on the left nor on the right. It offers criteria for discernment that people of different persuasions can share, and that leave room for democratic debate about means.
- **Not a religion.** It is in dialogue with the world's wisdom and spiritual traditions (chapter 12), but it rests on no revelation and demands no belief. Believers, agnostics, and atheists can all practice it.
- **Not punitive degrowth.** It does not make reduction an end in itself, and it does not induce guilt. Where reduction is needed, it proceeds with measure, protecting the floors.
- **Not blind growth.** Nor does it make increase an end in itself. It asks: growth in what, for whom, and how far?
- **Not a lukewarm middle ground.** The "soft center" that splits the difference is not conscious balance. As in Aristotle, right measure is a summit. It sometimes demands clear and courageous decisions: turning down a contract, shutting down a harmful activity, standing up for a person who has been excluded.
- **Not relativism.** Not everything is of equal worth. Dignity floors and ecological ceilings are not negotiable.
- **Not a utopia.** Equiconscism does not promise a perfect world. It offers a practice that can be applied today, wherever one is. *Magnifica Humanitas* speaks of "a healthy realism that avoids both political idealism and cynicism";[17] the SALTER guide, of a path that is neither fatalism nor naive idealism (section 7.2).

7.13 Dialogues: Peopleism and *Magnifica Humanitas*

Equiconscism is not alone. Two recent texts, from very different horizons, set out closely related intuitions. They deserve an attentive dialogue, one that respects their differences.

With Ravi Chaudhry's Peopleism

Ravi Chaudhry, founder chairman of CeNext Consulting, published *Capitalism to Peopleism: Inspiring a Leadership Transformation* (Simon & Schuster India) in 2024; it was named "Business Book of the Year – Business Management" at the FICCI Publishing Awards 2025 (see chapter 5). In it he defines Peopleism as "a system of governance that sensitively collates and meets the collective aspirations of all citizens, within sustainable resource parameters."[18]

The two approaches meet on essentials and complement each other through their levels. Ravi Chaudhry works mainly at the **macro** level: vision, governance, institutions, taxation. Equiconscism works mainly at the **meso** and **micro** levels: processes, questions, scorecards, practices, with links to the macro level. Where Ravi Chaudhry draws the architecture, Equiconscism proposes a way of holding one's place within it, in motion.

Theme	Ravi Chaudhry, *Capitalism to Peopleism*	Equiconscism	Nature of the Link
The triad	"Every entrepreneur requires three essential components in every endeavour: capital, people and nature" (p. 142)	The three dimensions: a measured and shared economy, an inclusive society built on solidarity, a respected and regenerated living world	Strong convergence
Balance	"In practice, awareness helps us strike a 'balance', a balance between diverse, conflicting demands" (p. 124); the balance between freedom and responsibility "has to be realized and nudged towards" (p. 58)	Conscious balance as a dynamic process; the five-movement cycle	Convergence; Equiconscism supplies the method
Measure	"The Knowledge Economy wants more. The Wisdom Economy understands the concept of 'enough'." (p. 110)	Right measure rather than the maximum; the corridor	Convergence
The corridor	Peopleism seeks to make "the corridor to liberty wide enough and spacious enough to accommodate everyone, everywhere" (p. 86, in response to Acemoglu and Robinson)	The corridor of right measure, with floors and ceilings	Echoing images, complementary meanings
The gaze	"A 360-degree view excludes; a 720-degree view includes those who are excluded" (p. 123)	Widening the gaze: involved, affected, absent	Very strong convergence
The long term	"a balance between short-term imperatives and long-term sustainability" (p. 162)	Sixth key question, "Timing and Cycles"	Convergence
The whole and the parts	"The part is as much in the whole, as the whole is in the part" (p. 210)	Linking the micro, meso, and macro levels	Common foundation
Positioning	"'Peopleism' is neither a leftist nor a rightist ideology" (p. 156)	Not a partisan ideology	Convergence

In his article published in *Fortune* on March 22, 2026, Ravi Chaudhry sums up his premise: capital remains indispensable, but it functions "as a means rather than a master," and the transition to a better world "is not guaranteed. It has to be chosen."[19] Equiconscism shares this language of choice.

Two nuances enrich the dialogue. Ravi Chaudhry proposes that "people" and "nature" take precedence over "capital"; Equiconscism seeks a differentiated balance among the three dimensions, in which capital, conceived as a means, remains in the service of the other two. And where Peopleism describes a system to be instituted, Equiconscism describes a process to be practiced. Each nourishes the other: one says *why* and *toward what* at the level of systems; the other proposes *how*, day to day, at the meso and micro levels.

With *Magnifica Humanitas*

On May 15, 2026, Pope Leo XIV published the encyclical *Magnifica Humanitas*, devoted to safeguarding the human person in the time of artificial intelligence. The text belongs to Catholic social teaching (dignity, the common good, the universal destination of goods, subsidiarity, solidarity) and contrasts two icons: Babel, a construction of pride and uniformity, and Nehemiah, who rebuilds Jerusalem through shared responsibility.

In its own language, *Magnifica Humanitas* formulates criteria that echo several of Equiconscism's intuitions. This is a **convergence of criteria**, not an endorsement.

Equiconscism	*Magnifica Humanitas*	Comment
Right measure rather than the maximum	"[T]echnical power, if left unbalanced, does not make us more capable" (no. 113, which also warns against "unchecked growth"; see 7.9)	The text closest to the image of the pendulum
Process rather than state	"[I]nitiating good processes and enabling them to mature" (no. 25); "harmonious growth" (no. 12)	Strong convergence
Differentiated equity	"[N]o single model of change or universal solution exists" (no. 153)	Very strong; equality of dignity remains absolute
Widening the gaze	"[T]he assessment of human and social impact" (no. 14); solidarity in the fullest sense "when it becomes a conscious choice" (no. 74)	Strong
Listening, knowing when to be silent	A "genuinely healthy attitude," "requiring rhythms that incorporate silence" (no. 146)	Strong
Linking the levels	Subsidiarity and solidarity inseparable (no. 73); decisions made "at the closest level possible to the persons involved" (no. 70)	Very strong
Answer and Pass On	"a culture of transparency, accountability and evaluation" (no. 86, on synodality)	Strong
Beyond GDP alone	"The development of parameters and metrics complementary to GDP is crucial" (no. 159)	Strong
Shared responsibility	"No one can single-handedly bear the weight of the challenges the world is facing, just as no one is so weak that they cannot play their part" (no. 13)	Echo of the hand on the pendulum

The differences must be stated with the same clarity. The encyclical grounds human dignity in God; Equiconscism is meant to be nondenominational. The encyclical's key notion is the accepted **limit**; that of Equiconscism is **dynamic balance**—two complementary notions, which no. 113 connects, but distinct ones. The idea of balance also carries a negative sense in the encyclical, when it warns that "the mentality of armed equilibrium and deterrence appears to be reasserting itself" (no. 204): that armed equilibrium is precisely the balance that Equiconscism is not. Finally,

the encyclical carries moral positions specific to Catholicism, which it is not Equiconscism's role either to endorse or to contest. The text itself opens this dialogue, regarding all who sincerely seek "truth, goodness and beauty" as "companions on the journey" and "precious allies" (no. 23).

7.14 The Practical Ecosystem on One Page

Equiconscism is a theory and a method. It draws on a few tools, each with a precise function.

Tool	Function	Where to Find It
SALTER	Diagnose: "Where do we stand, and what is the lever?" Six fractures, six levers: S — Saturation → Clarity; A — Artificiality → Embodied Presence; L — Lability → Inner Anchoring; T — Tribalism → Co-creation; E — Evasion → Responsibility; R — Rupture → Resonance	Chapter 2; *SALTER*® guide (2026), www.salter.ch
The ten key questions	Find one's bearings and discern, at every level	Chapter 8
The Ten-Question Scorecard	Measure: the ten questions scored from 1 (needs strengthening / absent) to 5 (fully integrated)	Chapter 8; appendix B
The Stakeholder Scorecard	Gather the perceptions of those involved and those affected	Chapter 14; appendix B
The Equiconscism workshop	Practice the cycle as a group	Chapter 14; appendix B
The Conscious Path	The inner journey in five stages: The Call, The Exploration, The Alignment, The Crossing, The Handing On	Appendix A

One practical caution: on the Ten-Question Scorecard a high score is favorable (5 = fully integrated); on the SALTER scale the reverse is true: a high score signals an intense fracture (1 = zone of lucidity, 5 = silent crisis). SALTER is diagnostic; Equiconscism is the broader framework of meaning and action, of which SALTER is the instrument for reading the present. Their common denominator is conscious balance. SALTER content remains subject to its own terms of use.

KEY QUESTION **The Ten Key Questions**

1. **Meaning and Purpose** — What is the deeper intention behind what I do, or what we do, and how does it truly serve the living world and the common good?
2. **Inner / Outer Balance** — How can I bring my needs, or those of our group, into harmony with those of others, of society, and of nature?
3. **Overall Impact** — What are the consequences of my choices—in the short, medium, and long term—at the ecological, social, economic, and cultural levels?
4. **Inclusion and Listening** — Who has not yet been heard or taken into account, and how can we give them a voice that truly influences the decision?
5. **Shared Responsibility** — What share of personal or collective responsibility do we take on, and how do we make it visible, so that it truly commits us?
6. **Timing and Cycles** — Where are we in the natural cycle of this project or this community, and what is the right rhythm for the next step?
7. **Power and Consent** — How do we distribute the domains of power so that decisions are made by consent rather than through coercion or inertia?
8. **Regenerative Innovation** — In what way does what we create contribute not only to "destroying less" but to regenerating human and natural resources?
9. **Legacy and Example** — What do we want to leave as our legacy—values, knowledge, practices—and how are we already demonstrating it in the way we act?
10. **Joy and Vitality** — Does this action nourish joy, the élan of life, and beauty—signs of conscious balance rather than of mere performance?

Three approaches developed by LP3 AG / SA, in Biel/Bienne, can support this work; we mention them briefly. **LP3®** is an approach to leadership, defined as "the ability to create movement and to mobilize people toward a common goal and an attractive vision," grounded in legitimate rather than formal power. Its name, LP³, reads as follows: the **L** stands for **Leadership**; the **P** to the power of three stands for **Potential**, **Power**, and **Performance**. Leaders who are aware of their strengths and their areas for vigilance (blind spots) know their potential, exercise their power with greater impact, and cause less collateral damage; it is then the performance of the whole organization that benefits. **Octocracy®** is an approach to governance that distributes decision rights and responsibility in organizations that wish to function neither in a purely hierarchical way nor without structure.[20] **Cofluencer®** denotes a stance: the ability to produce an effect together rather than to exert influence. Equiconscism®, SALTER®, LP3®, Octocracy®, and Cofluencer® are registered trademarks of LP3 AG / SA.

None of these tools is mandatory. Equiconscism can be practiced with a sheet of paper, a pencil, and the courage to ask the right questions.

In Brief

- **Definition**: Equiconscism is an economic and societal theory of conscious balance. It conceives of balance not as a state to be reached but as a dynamic, continuous, and differentiated process through which people, organizations, and societies constantly adjust their decisions so that the economy, society, and the living world support one another—by consciously widen-

ing their gaze to all those, human and non-human, present and yet to come, whom these decisions touch.

- **Emblem**: a hand (consciousness) accompanies a red pendulum (our decisions) that swings without reaching the extremes, above a pair of scales, against the background of an octopus, within a circle. A pendulum at rest no longer tells the time.
- **Three dimensions**: a measured and shared economy; an inclusive society built on solidarity; a respected and regenerated living world. Consciousness is not a fourth dimension: it is the hand that links them.
- **Corridor of right measure**: for each dimension and at each level, a floor and a ceiling; conscious balance is the regulated oscillation between the two. It extends Aristotle and Kate Raworth's Doughnut by adding dynamics and consciousness.
- **Method**: differentiated equity, widening the gaze (opening one's eyes, opening one's arms, opening one's heart, listening, knowing when to be silent), and the five-movement cycle (Perceive, Listen, Discern, Adjust, Answer and Pass On).
- **Seven principles**: movement rather than state; right measure rather than the maximum; differentiated equity rather than uniformity; widening the gaze; linking the levels; regeneration rather than mere preservation; embraced responsibility.
- **Dialogues**: complementarity with Ravi Chaudhry's Peopleism (macro level) and a convergence of criteria with *Magnifica Humanitas*, with respect for the distinct foundations of each.

Notes

1. David Fiorucci, SALTER® — *La boussole consciente pour un monde en mutation* (Biel/Bienne: LP3 AG / SA, 2026), p. 86 (uncaptioned photograph).
2. Ibid., chap. 20, "Le dénominateur commun: l'équilibre conscient"; see also the "Mot de la fin," p. 87.
3. Binyamin Hochner, "An Embodied View of Octopus Neurobiology," *Current Biology* 22, no. 20 (2012), pp. R887–R892 (the article notes that the arms contain about two-thirds of the octopus's roughly 500 million neurons; paraphrase). Data established for *Octopus vulgaris* (J. Z. Young, 1963/1971).
4. Kate Raworth, *A Safe and Just Space for Humanity*, Oxfam Discussion Paper, 2012; *Doughnut Economics* (London: Random House Business, 2017); French trans. *La Théorie du donut* (Paris: Plon, 2018).
5. Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research (PIK), "Seven of nine planetary boundaries now breached – ocean acidification joins the danger zone," September 24, 2025, https://www.pik-potsdam.de/en/news/latest-news/seven-of-nine-planetary-boundaries-now-breached-2013-ocean-acidification-joins-the-danger-zone; PIK, "Planetary Health Check 2026 finds mounting pressures across Earth's life-support systems," September 21, 2026, https://www.pik-potsdam.de/en/news/latest-news/planetary-health-check-2026-finds-mounting-pressures-across-earth2019s-life-support-systems (both accessed September 30, 2026).
6. Christiaan Huygens, *Horologium* (The Hague, 1658); *Horologium oscillatorium* (Paris, 1673). Privilege (patent) granted to Huygens on June 16, 1657; clock built by Salomon Coster (see *Œuvres complètes*, vol. XVII, *L'horloge à pendule 1656-1666*, 1932, "L'horloge à pendule de 1657," and the appendix reproducing the contract entered into by Coster).
7. Pat Dallard et al., "The London Millennium Footbridge," *The Structural Engineer* 79, no. 22 (2001); Steven H. Strogatz et al., "Crowd synchrony on the Millennium Bridge," *Nature* 438 (2005): pp. 43–44. Opened June 10, 2000; closed June 12, 2000; reopened February 22, 2002.
8. Christiaan Huygens, *Œuvres complètes* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff), vol. V, *Correspondance 1664-1665*, 1893, and vol. XVII, *L'horloge à pendule 1656-1666*, 1932, section "Horloges marines (et sympathie des horloges)," V, 1665 (letters and notes from February–March 1665); see M. Bennett et al., "Huygens's clocks," *Proceedings of the Royal Society* A 458 (2002): pp. 563–579.
9. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, V, 5–7 (1130b–1132b; Bekker numbering), paraphrase.
10. Amartya Sen, *Commodities and Capabilities* (Amsterdam: North-Holland, 1985); *Development as Freedom* (New York: Knopf, 1999); French trans. *Un nouveau modèle économique* (Paris: Odile Jacob, 2000).
11. Leo XIV, Encyclical Letter *Magnifica Humanitas* (May 15, 2026), no. 153, accessed October 16, 2026, https://www.vatican.va/content/leo-xiv/en/encyclicals/documents/20260515-magnifica-humanitas.html.

12. Ravi Chaudhry, *Capitalism to Peopleism: Inspiring a Leadership Transformation* (New Delhi: Simon & Schuster India, 2024), p. 123.
13. Ibid., p. 57: "the views that are not articulated, as these are held by the people who have no access to the leader."
14. *Magnifica Humanitas*, no. 113.
15. Ibid., no. 73.
16. Chaudhry, *Capitalism to Peopleism*, p. 210: "The part is as important as the whole. Every part is an indivisible part of the whole. The part is as much in the whole, as the whole is in the part. Neither functions without the other."
17. *Magnifica Humanitas*, no. 218.
18. Chaudhry, *Capitalism to Peopleism*, p. 16. Quotations in the table: pp. 142, 124, 58, 110, 86, 162, and 156. Printed page numbers of the hardcover edition (ISBN 978-81-972789-4-5).
19. Ravi Chaudhry, "Our economy has been living in an Adam Smith world since 1776. Something different is coming," *Fortune*, March 22, 2026, https://fortune.com/2026/03/22/economy-adam-smith-250th-anniversary-wealth-of-nations-outlook-ai/.
20. David Fiorucci and Thomas Nast, *Octocratie — Redonnons du sens aux organisations* (Bern: jahr+tag, 2024), ISBN 978-3-9526038-1-9. On LP3®: David Fiorucci and Thomas Nast, *Leader pour une économie durable* (Bern: Stämpfli, 2017; German original 2016).

CHAPTER 8

The Ten Key Questions: A Compass for Everyone

> *"The unexamined life is not worth living."*
>
> — Plato, *Apology*, 38a (our translation)[1]

> *"To find the right answers, we must ask the right questions, and then keep questioning the questions till we have fully understood every aspect of the new reality that envelopes us."*
>
> — Ravi Chaudhry, *Capitalism to Peopleism*, 2024[2]

A rule tells us what to do. A question makes us look. The difference is decisive for a theory that conceives of balance as a process rather than a state (see chapter 7). A rule is written once and for all, for a typical situation; it begins to age as soon as the context changes. A question, by contrast, adapts to every situation precisely because it does not contain the answer: it obliges whoever asks it to seek that answer, here and now, with the people concerned.

Socrates knew this. In the *Theaetetus*, he compares himself to a midwife, as his mother Phaenarete had been: he does not give birth to knowledge himself; he helps others bring into the world what they already carry, and then examines with them whether what has been born is viable.[3] Maieutics is not a technique for manipulating people through questions; it is an art of shared examination, one that requires us to bear for a while the discomfort of not knowing. Here we find again the gestures of widening the gaze described in chapter 7: opening one's eyes, listening, knowing when to be silent.

From this we draw a simple conviction: **the quality of our decisions depends on the quality of our questions**. Organizations that fail rarely do so for lack of answers. They often have excellent dashboards, excellent experts, excellent procedures. They fail because a question was not asked in time: Whom are we doing this for? Whom have we not heard? What will this choice cost in ten years, and who will pay?

The ten key questions of Equiconscism were formulated for exactly this purpose. They are deliberately open, so as to suit every level of action, "from personal reflection to the governance of a state," in the author's phrase. They sit at the heart of the cycle of conscious balance, in the movement of **Discern**: after perceiving the situation and listening to the voices, it is with these questions that we weigh, on the scales, needs, thresholds, and time horizons. They constitute an **inner compass**. The term calls for a clarification. The SALTER guide, published in 2026, presents itself as "the conscious compass for a changing world": it serves to read the six fractures of the present and to find the right lever.[4] The ten questions have a different function. They do not diagnose

fractures; they orient decisions toward balance. SALTER answers the question "Where are we?"; the ten questions answer the question "Toward what, and how?" The two instruments complement each other; we will return to this in chapter 14.

Together, the ten questions, the Ten-Question Scorecard, and the Stakeholder Scorecard form what the author calls a **triptych**: *reflection* (the questions awaken consciousness and orient action), *measurement* (the scorecard tracks progress and tensions), and *dialogue* (the Stakeholder Scorecard gives a voice to those who live the project). This chapter presents the questions one by one, then shows how to bring them together in a scorecard and in an image, the conscious balance radar. The ready-to-use tools themselves appear in appendix B.

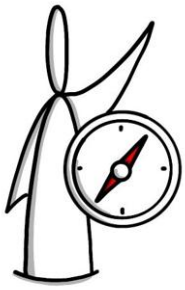
FOCUS **How to Read Each Question**

Each question is presented in the same structure:

- the **canonical wording**, to be used exactly as written;
- **what is at stake**: what the question protects or reveals;
- the **foundations**: one or two solid references drawn from philosophy, the human sciences, or management science;
- what the question changes **at each level**: the person, the organization, the community;
- **warning signs**: concrete indications that the question is being neglected;
- **a practice**: something simple you can apply tomorrow;
- the **link to SALTER**, where it sheds light on the question.

The ten questions are not ranked. Their order follows a movement: from meaning (why) to joy (how we know it is right), passing through others, impact, power, time, and legacy.

8.1 Meaning and Purpose



Question 1 — Meaning and Purpose

KEY QUESTION **Question 1 — Meaning and Purpose**

What is the deeper intention behind what I do, or what we do, and how does it truly serve the living world and the common good?

What Is at Stake. Every action loses its force if it has no clear direction. In the image of the pendulum (see chapter 7), meaning is what gives the swing its point of suspension: without it, movement becomes mere agitation. The question has two moments. The first is introspective: what is

the *deeper* intention, as opposed to the stated one? The second is a test: does this intention *truly* serve the living world and the common good, or only a logic of profit, image, or power? The word "truly" is essential. Almost every organization today has a statement of purpose. Far fewer allow it to overrule a profitable decision.

Foundations. The Viennese psychiatrist Viktor Frankl, a survivor of the concentration camps, founded logotherapy on one observation: human beings are driven first of all by a "will to meaning." He writes that everything can be taken from a man but one thing: "the last of the human freedoms—to choose one's attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one's own way."[5] Meaning, then, is not a luxury reserved for calm periods; it is what allows us to get through troubled ones. Public health research points in the same direction. The sociologist Aaron Antonovsky showed that the "sense of coherence," whose decisive component is the feeling that life has meaning (*meaningfulness*), protects health in the face of stress.[6] The encyclical *Magnifica Humanitas*, for its part, opens with the same inquiry, addressed to all of humanity: "Where are we going? Toward what goal do we wish to orient ourselves?"[7] The convergence concerns the criterion, not the foundation: the encyclical's answer is theological; that of Equiconscism is not.

At Each Level.

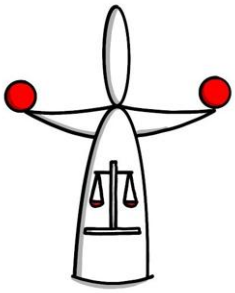
- *Person*: being able to say in one sentence why you do what you do, and recognizing the activities that no longer serve that purpose.
- *Organization*: a purpose that genuinely guides budget trade-offs, hiring, and the things the organization chooses to give up.
- *Community*: public policies assessed by their ends (quality of life, cohesion, viability), and not only by their means.

Warning Signs. The purpose is mentioned only in annual reports. No one can explain why a project still exists. Indicators have replaced ends (people aim at the number and have forgotten what it was supposed to measure). The vocabulary of meaning is abundant, but difficult decisions never refer to it.

> **IN PRACTICE The Sentence and the Test**
>
> Write the purpose of your project, your team, or your commitment in a single sentence. Reread it before every important decision. Then apply the test the author proposes: "Does this nourish life or destroy it?"[8] If the answer is uncertain, the decision deserves a second look.

Link to SALTER. The first question extends the lever of **Clarity**, the response to the fracture of **Saturation**, and its guiding question: "What is essential—and what is merely urgent?" Where SALTER helps to desaturate, the first question helps to reorient.

8.2 Inner / Outer Balance



Question 2 — Inner / Outer Balance

KEY QUESTION **Question 2 — Inner / Outer Balance**

How can I bring my needs, or those of our group, into harmony with those of others, of society, and of nature?

What Is at Stake. Too much attention to oneself breeds selfishness and blindness. Too much attention to others breeds exhaustion, and often bitterness. Inner balance and outer balance are not opposed: each is a condition of the other. As the author reminds us (see chapter 9), a sick system ends up making individuals sick, and an exhausted person does not build a balanced team. This question applies the **corridor of right measure** to everyday life: for oneself as for the group, there is a floor (what I need to stay on my feet) and a ceiling (the point beyond which my needs encroach on those of others or of the living world). It also applies **differentiated equity**: needs are not identical, and bringing them into harmony does not mean making them equal.

Foundations. The Jewish tradition has given this tension one of its most fitting formulations: the three questions of Hillel the Elder, quoted and discussed in chapter 12 (section 12.2), amount on their own to a program of balance—the legitimacy of one's own needs, their limit, and the urgency of acting.[9] Contemporary psychology confirms that the two poles are linked. The self-determination theory of Edward Deci and Richard Ryan establishes that lasting well-being rests on three basic psychological needs: autonomy, competence, and relatedness.[10] The third cannot be satisfied without others. At the scale of societies, Kate Raworth gave this balance the shape of the "Doughnut": a social foundation that must not be breached, an ecological ceiling that must not be overshot.[11]

At Each Level.

- *Person*: time, money, and attention shared among oneself, one's loved ones, work, and civic or social commitment.
- *Organization*: performance pursued without exhausting teams, suppliers, or local communities.
- *Community*: the interests of a municipality, a region, or a country reconciled with those of its neighbors, of future generations, and of ecosystems.

Warning Signs. Sick leave is rising while results are good. The phrase "we have no choice" is repeated about choices that are, in fact, choices. People no longer rest, or no longer commit to anything beyond themselves. A group feels threatened as soon as the needs of another group are mentioned.

> **IN PRACTICE** **The Four Circles**
>
> Once a month, examine a recent decision through four circles: my health (or that of the team), my loved ones, my community, the living world. For each, note whether the decision nourished, left intact, or depleted that circle. The author offers a concrete image for anyone who leads: ask yourself "how I enter a room, what I bring into it, what I leave behind."[12]

Link to SALTER. The second question connects with the lever of **Inner Anchoring**, the response to the fracture of **Lability**: "What remains of me when everything changes?" Without anchoring, attention to others turns into dispersion. It also echoes the call of *Magnifica Humanitas*, which reminds us that "without a proper balance between work, leisure and rest, families are weakened."[13]

8.3 Overall Impact



Question 3 — Overall Impact

> **KEY QUESTION** **Question 3 — Overall Impact**
>
> What are the consequences of my choices—in the short, medium, and long term—at the ecological, social, economic, and cultural levels?

What Is at Stake. Hidden effects emerge over time. A decision can be excellent at three months and disastrous at ten years; profitable for those who make it and costly for those who did not. This question crosses two axes: **time** (short, medium, and long term) and **dimensions** (ecological, social, economic, cultural). The mention of culture deserves attention: it reminds us that a project can destroy skills, landscapes, languages, or bonds without this showing up in any balance sheet. This is where widening the gaze becomes a method: identifying **those involved**, **those affected**, and **those absent** (see chapter 7 and the worksheet in appendix B).

Foundations. As early as 1920, the British economist Arthur Cecil Pigou provided the framework for thinking about these effects. In *The Economics of Welfare*, he describes the gap between an activity's "marginal private net product" and its "marginal social net product": a factory that fills a neighborhood with smoke makes others bear a cost that does not appear in its accounts.[14] Today

we call this an *externality*. The third question is, at bottom, an invitation to make one's externalities visible, negative as well as positive, before others pay for them. The engineering sciences have developed the corresponding tool: **life cycle assessment**, standardized by ISO 14040 and 14044, which follows a product "from cradle to grave," from the extraction of raw materials to the end of its life.[15] Economic history also counsels caution. As early as 1865, William Stanley Jevons observed that gains in the efficiency of coal use had increased, not reduced, total consumption.[16] This is the "rebound effect," or Jevons paradox (see chapter 4): a local improvement can worsen the overall result.

At Each Level.

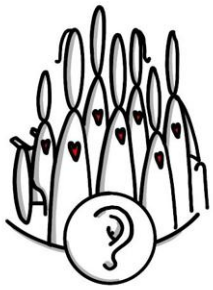
- *Person*: a purchase, a trip, an investment, or a vote considered beyond its immediate effect.
- *Organization*: an impact assessment that includes supply chains, the end of life of products, and the effects on local communities.
- *Community*: genuinely adversarial impact studies before major projects, taking future generations into account.

Warning Signs. Decisions are assessed only on the current financial year. Social or cultural effects are deemed "unmeasurable," and therefore left out. An efficiency gain is celebrated without anyone checking what it triggers elsewhere. Costs are systematically shifted onto actors who were not at the table.

> **IN PRACTICE** **The Horizons Matrix and the "Premortem"**
>
> Draw a matrix with three columns (short, medium, and long term) and four rows (ecological, social, economic, cultural). Fill in all twelve cells for any major project. Complete it with the "premortem" exercise proposed by the psychologist Gary Klein: imagine that the project has failed five years from now, and ask everyone to write down why.[17] Hidden effects often come out of the shadows at that moment.

Link to SALTER. In its discussion of **Artificiality**, the SALTER guide describes "a distance between action and its human consequences": the more a decision passes through models and dashboards, the further its effects move away from those who make it. The lever of **Embodied Presence** ("Where does a human being still decide, and where only a model?") is therefore the condition for overall impact to be seen, and not merely calculated. Ravi Chaudhry states the same requirement in a sentence quoted at the end of chapter 9.[18]

8.4 Inclusion and Listening



Question 4 — Inclusion and Listening

KEY QUESTION **Question 4 — Inclusion and Listening**

Who has not yet been heard or taken into account, and how can we give them a voice that truly influences the decision?

What Is at Stake. Minority voices are often bearers of innovation. They see what the majority no longer sees: the customer who cannot manage to use the service, the apprentice who notices that a procedure is absurd, the resident of a neighborhood that the new road will cut in two. The question has two parts, and the second is the more demanding: it is not enough to hear; the voice that is heard must **truly influence the decision**. Without that, listening becomes a ritual that breeds more distrust than trust. The question also concerns **those absent**, who cannot speak for themselves: future generations, animals, ecosystems, people too vulnerable or too distant to make themselves heard.

Foundations. In 1969, the American researcher Sherry Arnstein published an article that has become a classic, "A Ladder of Citizen Participation." In it she distinguishes eight rungs, from *manipulation* and *therapy* (nonparticipation) to *citizen control*, by way of *informing*, *consultation*, and *placation*, which she groups under the name of "tokenism." Her conclusion remains strikingly relevant: "participation without redistribution of power is an empty and frustrating process for the powerless."[19] The fourth question therefore asks us to place ourselves honestly on this ladder. Ravi Chaudhry makes it a criterion of leadership: a good leader is recognized not by how they respond to vocal majorities and lobbyists, but by their ability to listen to "the views that are not articulated," because these are held by the people who have no access to the leader.[20]

At Each Level.

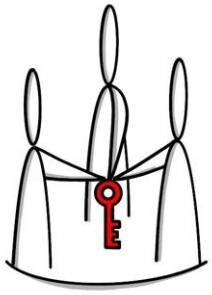
- *Person*: identifying, in one's family or team, the person who is listened to least, and asking for their opinion first.
- *Organization*: involving those who will live with the effects in the design of a product or a reorganization, and telling them what was taken from their input.
- *Community*: participatory mechanisms that climb Arnstein's ladder (participatory budgets, citizens' assemblies chosen by lot; see chapter 9).

Warning Signs. It is always the same people who speak. Consultation happens after the decision has been made. The results of a consultation are never published. People talk about those concerned without them. Disagreements are treated as resistance to be managed rather than as information.

> **IN PRACTICE The Listening Circle**
>
> Bring the people concerned together in a circle. Each speaks in turn, without interruption, about **their experience** rather than their opinions; the others listen without replying. The SALTER guide gives the reason: "we can argue about opinions, not about experiences."[21] Close by saying what will be done with what has been heard, and when you will come back to them.

Link to SALTER. This question responds directly to the fracture of **Tribalism** and its lever, **Co-creation**: "Are we building bridges or walls?" You cannot co-create with people you have not listened to.

8.5 Shared Responsibility



Question 5 — Shared Responsibility

> **KEY QUESTION Question 5 — Shared Responsibility**
>
> What share of personal or collective responsibility do we take on, and how do we make it visible, so that it truly commits us?

What Is at Stake. Without responsibility, there is no lasting change. But responsibility has two symmetrical enemies: dilution ("everyone is responsible, so no one is") and overload (a single person carries everything, to the point of exhaustion). The question asks us to name a **share**—neither everything nor nothing—and to make it **visible**. This is the meaning of the English word accountability, which French renders poorly as *responsabilité*. To be accountable is to answer for one's actions before others, to give an account of what one has done and of what one has not done.

Foundations. Social psychology has described the dilution of responsibility with precision. In 1968, John Darley and Bibb Latané showed experimentally that the more witnesses there are to an emergency, the less each one intervenes, and the later they do so.[22] Each assumes that someone else will act. The philosopher Iris Marion Young transposed this reflection to the scale of structural injustice: when we take part, through our purchases, our investments, or our work, in processes that produce harm, we share responsibility for it—not as a fault to be expiated, but as a task to be taken up together in order to transform those processes.[23] This is her "social connec-

tion model." The SALTER guide offers an everyday version of it (see chapter 2): "I am not responsible for everything, but I am always responsible for something."[24] And *Magnifica Humanitas* expresses the same intuition at the collective level: "No one can single-handedly bear the weight of the challenges the world is facing, just as no one is so weak that they cannot play their part."[25]

At Each Level.

- *Person*: acknowledging one's share in a difficulty, without taking all of it upon oneself or pushing it onto others.
- *Organization*: for each decision, a named person responsible, a deadline, and a success criterion; accessible minutes and reports.
- *Community*: public commitments followed by published indicators, and independent oversight bodies.

Warning Signs. Decisions "come down from above" with no identifiable author. Mistakes are hidden rather than analyzed. Commitments multiply without follow-up. The same people carry everything and wear themselves out, while others look on.

> **IN PRACTICE** **The Commitment Contract**
>
> Alone or as a group, draft a short "commitment contract": three measurable actions, one person responsible for each action, a date, a success criterion. Post it where it will be seen. Review it together when the date arrives, starting with what has not been done, and why, without looking for someone to blame.

Link to SALTER. The fifth question is the positive counterpart of the fracture of **Evasion**, whose lever is **Responsibility**: "Who really takes responsibility for what, here?" The guide points out that evasion does not necessarily show up as inaction: one can be very busy precisely in order to own nothing.

8.6 Timing and Cycles



Question 6 — Timing and Cycles

> **KEY QUESTION** **Question 6 — Timing and Cycles**
>
> Where are we in the natural cycle of this project or this community, and what is the right rhythm for the next step?

What Is at Stake. Respecting a project's rhythm prevents both exhaustion and stagnation. Our era tends to know only one season: growth. The author speaks of organizations that live in a "permanent summer," demanding that every quarter outdo the previous one until they burn out, and, conversely, of those that "stagnate in winter" and no longer dare to begin anything. Yet every living project passes through different phases: germination, growth, maturity, transition. Each calls for a different kind of conduct. What is right in spring (daring, experimenting) becomes reckless in autumn (when the task is rather to consolidate, to hand on, and sometimes to let go). The sixth question is the direct application of the first principle of Equiconscism: movement rather than state.

Foundations. Biblical wisdom said it with unequaled concision: "For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven."[26] Scientific ecology has given it a rigorous version. The adaptive cycle described by Crawford Stanley Holling and Lance Gunderson shows that ecosystems—but also organizations and societies—pass through four phases: exploitation (rapid growth), conservation (accumulation, rigidification), release (collapse or rupture), and reorganization (renewal).[27] Each phase has its own logic; trying to prolong conservation indefinitely makes the system fragile and prepares a brutal release. Chapter 3 showed that the great narratives of the cycles of humanity can be read in the same way—not as laws, but as mirrors. The sixth question brings these readings down to the scale of concrete decisions. The author offers an image for it: "Trying to transform without respecting these rhythms is like forcing a flower to open faster: you break its stem."[28]

At Each Level.

- *Person*: recognizing the seasons of one's own life (learning, intense commitment, handing on) and not demanding the same intensity of oneself in all of them.
- *Organization*: distinguishing the projects to launch, to accelerate, to consolidate, and to stop; organizing endings as carefully as beginnings.
- *Community*: designing reforms according to their maturity and the absorptive capacity of the people concerned, instead of piling them up.

Warning Signs. Everything is urgent; nothing is important. No project is ever stopped. Reforms follow one another before the previous one has had time to take effect. The people who carried one phase are pushed aside without recognition when the next one begins.

> **IN PRACTICE The Cycle Review**
>
> Once a quarter, or once a year, devote a session to a single question: What phase are we in (germination, growth, maturity, transition)? Then: What rhythm does this phase call for? What should we start, continue, slow down, stop? Adjust goals and resources accordingly. Chapter 3 (section 3.6) offers a variant based on the four phases of Holling's adaptive cycle.

Link to SALTER. The lever of **Inner Anchoring**, the response to **Lability**, invites us to build reference points that allow us to evolve without dissolving. Knowing which phase we are in is one of those reference points.

8.7 Power and Consent



Question 7 — Power and Consent

> **KEY QUESTION** **Question 7 — Power and Consent**
>
> How do we distribute the domains of power so that decisions are made by consent rather than through coercion or inertia?

What Is at Stake. Poorly distributed power creates deadlock or resentment. Too concentrated, it exhausts those who hold it and infantilizes everyone else. Too diluted, it paralyzes. The question names two drifts. **Coercion** is familiar: the decision that is imposed, endured, worked around. **Inertia** is less so: it is the decision that no one made but everyone applies, because "that's how we've always done it." Consent is distinct from both. It does not require everyone to agree (that would be consensus, often out of reach); it requires that no one have a serious, reasoned objection. Equiconscism does not make consent a dogma: some decisions legitimately belong to one person, to an elected authority, or to an emergency. The question concerns *distribution*: who decides what, and by what method?

Foundations. Decision by consent was formalized by the Dutch engineer Gerard Endenburg, who put it into practice in his electrical engineering company from the 1970s onward, drawing on the sociocracy of the educator Kees Boeke.[29] Its principle: a decision is made when no member of the circle concerned has a reasoned and paramount objection with regard to the shared aim. An objection is not a veto based on preference; it is information about a risk that the group must address. Ravi Chaudhry places the question at the level of societies: for him, good governance rests on the capacity of all to resist authority when it is abused (see chapter 9, section 9.8).[30] *Magnifica Humanitas* warns against the opposite risk, that of "only an apparent consensus from populations that are frightened or manipulated."[31] Genuine consent therefore presupposes information, freedom of speech, and the absence of fear. Octocracy®, a governance approach developed by LP3 AG / SA, offers a way to organize this distribution of decision rights in organizations that want to function neither in a purely hierarchical way nor without structure.[32]

At Each Level.

- *Person*: in a couple, a family, or a shared household, clarifying who decides what, rather than letting habit decide.
- *Organization*: an explicit map of decision domains; consent for decisions that commit the group; clear delegation for the rest.

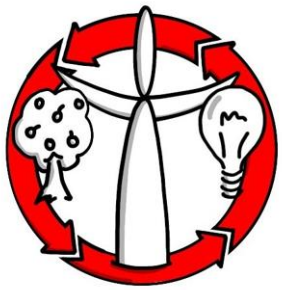
- *Community*: real checks and balances, deliberative processes, and subsidiarity that places decisions as close as possible to those concerned.

Warning Signs. Important decisions are made in the corridors. Meetings serve to ratify what has already been decided. No one dares to object in front of the hierarchy. Absurd rules persist because no one feels authorized to change them.

> **IN PRACTICE** **The Objection Round**
>
> For a collective decision, present the proposal, hold a round of clarifying questions, then a round of reactions. Finally, ask: "Does anyone have a reasoned objection—that is, a reason to think this proposal takes us away from our goal or creates a risk we cannot accept?" Each objection is welcomed as information, and the proposal is improved until no reasoned objection remains.

Link to SALTER. The seventh question intersects two fractures: **Tribalism**, when power withdraws into one group, and **Evasion**, when inertia takes the place of decision. The guide sums up the latter case in one sentence: "Not deciding is a decision. It's just that no one owns it."

8.8 Regenerative Innovation



Question 8 — Regenerative Innovation

> **KEY QUESTION** **Question 8 — Regenerative Innovation**
>
> In what way does what we create contribute not only to "destroying less" but to regenerating human and natural resources?

What Is at Stake. Going beyond the "lesser evil." For decades, sustainability consisted mainly of reducing damage: fewer emissions, less waste, fewer accidents. That was necessary. It is no longer enough, because "destroying less" is still destroying. The eighth question asks for more: that what we create leave soils, ecosystems, people, and relationships **in better shape** than before. This is the sixth principle of Equiconscism, regeneration rather than mere preservation, and the third dimension, a respected and regenerated living world. The question applies to human resources as much as to natural ones. The author proposes a very simple indicator: "a team member who comes out of a project more inspired than when they went in is a regenerated resource."[33]

Foundations. In 2015 the economist and former banker John Fullerton proposed a framework for a "regenerative economy" based on the observation of living systems. He draws from it eight principles, among them "right relationship," a holistic view of wealth, participation, rootedness in

places and communities, and, last of all, the pursuit of balance ("seeks balance").[34] For him, economic vigor is the product of human and social vitality, itself rooted in ecological health. The architect Bill Reed clarified the difference between levels of ambition: from conventional practice to "green" practice (less damage), then sustainable (neutrality), restorative (repairing), and finally regenerative (enabling the system to renew itself).[35] This gradation offers a simple ladder on which to place a project.

At Each Level.

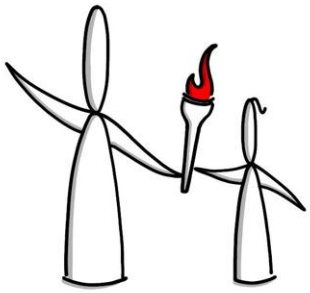
- *Person*: activities that replenish rather than deplete; repairing, planting, passing on a skill.
- *Organization*: products and services that restore (soils, biodiversity, skills, local cohesion), not merely offset.
- *Community*: policies for renaturation, the rehabilitation of brownfield sites, lifelong learning, and the rebuilding of social bonds.

Warning Signs. Ambition stops at regulatory compliance. Offsetting replaces the effort to reduce. Innovation is conceived solely as a productivity gain. Teams come out of projects drained rather than enlarged.

> **IN PRACTICE The Regeneration Ladder**
>
> Place each project on five rungs: 1. it destroys; 2. it destroys less; 3. it is neutral; 4. it repairs; 5. it regenerates. Do the exercise for three resources: the living world (soils, water, biodiversity), human skills, and social bonds. Then look for a change that would move the project up one rung on one of the three.

Link to SALTER. The SALTER guide's maturity model culminates at level 5, "regenerative": there the organization recognizes fractures early, addresses them as a matter of routine, and passes on its experience; it strengthens its environment.[36] The eighth question extends this ambition to natural resources.

8.9 Legacy and Example



Question 9 — Legacy and Example

> **KEY QUESTION Question 9 — Legacy and Example**
>
> What do we want to leave as our legacy—values, knowledge, practices—and how are we already demonstrating it in the way we act?

What Is at Stake. What we leave behind matters more than what we own. Here again, the question has two moments. The first looks to the future: what legacy? The second brings us back to the present: how are we *already* demonstrating it? For we pass on first what we do, far more than what we say. A value that is proclaimed and contradicted by actions passes on, above all, cynicism. Conversely, a consistent gesture, repeated, eventually becomes a culture. The question thus links the fifth movement of the cycle of conscious balance, *Answer and Pass On*, to the last stage of the Conscious Path, the Handing On (see appendix A).

Foundations. The psychoanalyst Erik Erikson called "generativity" the task of adulthood: concern for establishing and guiding the next generation—through children, but also through works, institutions, and knowledge.[37] Its opposite is stagnation, a turning in on oneself. The psychologist Albert Bandura showed, for his part, that most human behavior is learned by observing models: what the people we watch do shapes us at least as much as what they tell us.[38] Leading by example is therefore not a decorative virtue; it is the main channel through which things are handed on. Ravi Chaudhry draws the consequence for business: "If the CEO personally feels socially responsible, each individual in the organization also becomes socially responsible."[39] *Magnifica Humanitas* applies this demand to itself: the Church, the text says, is "always called to ensure that the principles outlined in this chapter are applied, especially within its own structures," and the encyclical takes up, with the Final Document of the Synod, "a culture of transparency, accountability and evaluation."[40]

At Each Level.

- *Person*: the everyday gestures that children, colleagues, or loved ones see and will reproduce.
- *Organization*: documenting what has been learned, mentoring, preparing successions; leaders who apply to themselves first the rules they ask of others.
- *Community*: education, the memory of mistakes as well as successes, institutions designed to last beyond a single legislative term.

Warning Signs. Departures take knowledge with them. The same mistakes recur every five years. Management exempts itself from the rules it imposes. Values are talked about in the same tone as compliance.

> **IN PRACTICE The Learning Log and the Pair**
>
> At the end of each project, record on a single page what you have learned: what worked, what failed, what you would do differently. Keep these pages where the next team will find them. Form intergenerational pairs that work in both directions: experience passed on to the younger, and the skills of the younger passed on to the older.

Link to SALTER. Leading by example is the most demanding form of the lever of **Responsibility**, the response to **Evasion**. Among the most frequent mistakes, the SALTER guide cites precisely that of exempting management from the process.

8.10 Joy and Vitality



Question 10 — Joy and Vitality

> **KEY QUESTION** **Question 10 — Joy and Vitality**
>
> Does this action nourish joy, the élan of life, and beauty—signs of conscious balance rather than of mere performance?

What Is at Stake. Joy is an indicator of rightness. This claim may come as a surprise in a book on economics; it is nonetheless one of the most solid in Equiconscism. An organization can function perfectly and yet no longer stir anything in anyone: the numbers are good, the processes run, the people are competent, and something has gone out. The tenth question serves to detect this gap between functioning and vitality. It does not ask people to be joyful on command, which would be a new form of pressure. It asks whether the action **nourishes** joy, élan, and beauty, or consumes them. It joins the seventh principle—recognizing joy and vitality as signs of rightness (see chapter 7)—and extends the reflection of chapter 11 on beauty and right proportion.

Foundations. Baruch Spinoza gave joy a definition that has nothing sentimental about it (see chapter 6): "Joy is man's passage from a lesser to a greater perfection" (our translation).[41] For him, joy accompanies an increase in our power of acting; sadness, its decrease. To gauge joy, then, is to observe whether an action makes us more capable or less. Contemporary psychology has given this intuition an empirical basis. Barbara Fredrickson's "broaden-and-build" theory shows that positive emotions broaden our repertoire of thoughts and actions and, over time, build personal resources: physical, intellectual, social, and psychological.[42] Joy is not the reward of performance; it is often its condition.

At Each Level.

- *Person*: noticing the activities after which one feels more alive, and those after which one feels diminished.
- *Organization*: laughter, curiosity, pride in work well done, and the beauty of the workplace treated as indicators rather than distractions.
- *Community*: beautiful and lively public spaces, culture, festivity, sport, and nature accessible to all.

Warning Signs. No one laughs in meetings anymore. The best people leave without explanation. The vocabulary of performance has replaced that of meaning. Workplaces are functional and dreary. The only moment of collective joy is leaving on vacation.

IN PRACTICE **The Moment of Gratitude**

End each meeting or each important stage with a brief round: everyone names a moment of satisfaction, gratitude, or beauty experienced during the period. The author points to an even simpler indicator: "A team that laughs together is a team that breathes."[43]

Link to SALTER. The tenth question echoes the fracture of **Rupture** and its lever, **Resonance**: "Does what we do still touch us?" The SALTER guide puts it in one key sentence: "We can go on functioning well. The question is whether we still resonate."[44]

8.11 The Ten Questions Together: The Scorecard

Taken one by one, the ten questions shed light on a decision. Taken together, they give a picture of the balance of a person, a team, an organization, or a community. That is the role of the **Ten-Question Scorecard**, designed by the author and presented in operational form in appendix B.

In it, each question is restated as a brief statement, which is rated on a scale of 1 to 5:

Score	Meaning
1	Needs strengthening: the dimension is absent or very weak
2	Weak: present in intentions, rarely in actions
3	Moderate: present, but inconsistently
4	Good: integrated into most decisions
5	Fully integrated: the dimension is part of the culture and is borne out in actions

The average of the ten scores gives an overall reading, in four zones:

Average	Zone	Reading and Direction
1–2	**Alert**	Conscious balance is very weak. Priority: an in-depth review and a few rapid corrective actions.
2.1–3	**Transition**	Awareness is awakening, but inconsistent. Identify the two or three lowest-scoring questions and build a targeted plan.
3.1–4	**Emergence**	Good commitment, but some areas remain fragile. Consolidate practices and make assessments regular.
4.1–5	**Balance**	Equiconscism is actively embodied. Stay the course, share practices, support other actors.

> **FOCUS Caution: Two Scales Running in Opposite Directions**
>
> On the Ten-Question Scorecard **a high score is favorable** (5 = fully integrated); on the SALTER scale the reverse is true: **a high score signals an intense fracture** (1 = zone of lucidity, 5 = silent crisis). When the two tools are used together, say so at every presentation of results, and never plot the two series on the same chart without indicating this clearly.

Four rules of use keep the scorecard from becoming what it must not be.

First, the average does not tell the whole story. An average of 3.5 can hide a 1 on inclusion or on overall impact. In the spirit of the corridor of right measure, a score of 1 on a single question counts as a breached floor: it calls for action, whatever the average.

Second, differences between people are information. In a group, each person scores alone, anonymously, before any discussion. When the scores for a single question range from 1 to 5, the disagreement is more instructive than the average: it reveals different experiences of the same reality. The discussion focuses first on these gaps.

Third, the scorecard is a mirror, not an exam. It is not designed to rank teams or to evaluate individuals. As soon as a score becomes a target to be reached, it stops telling the truth: this is the meaning of "Goodhart's law," in the formulation of the anthropologist Marilyn Strathern that chapter 14 quotes and discusses (section 14.5).[45]

Fourth, it is the trend that counts. A single assessment is a snapshot; a series of assessments, quarterly or annual, becomes a film. Since conscious balance is a process, so is its measurement.

The scorecard does not replace listening to the people concerned. It collects a self-assessment, which is necessarily partial. That is why it is complemented by the **Stakeholder Scorecard**, which asks those who live the project (employees, beneficiaries, partners, residents) how they perceive it. Comparing the two is often the most fruitful moment of the whole process: wherever the self-assessment is markedly more favorable than the stakeholders' perception, there is usually a blind spot. Both scorecards, the step-by-step workshop that puts them to work, and the "Widening the Gaze" worksheet appear in appendix B.

8.12 The Conscious Balance Radar

The ten scores can be displayed in the form of a **radar** (or spider chart). Draw ten axes radiating from a common center, one per question, in order from 1 to 10, like the spokes of a wheel. Each axis is graduated from 1 (near the center) to 5 (at the edge). Plot each question's score on its axis, then join the points. The resulting shape can be read at a glance.

- A **large, regular shape** indicates well-established conscious balance.
- A **small but regular shape** indicates an approach that is just beginning: nothing is solid yet, but nothing has been sacrificed.
- A **star shape**, with peaks and hollows, indicates an imbalance: some dimensions receive a great deal of investment, others are neglected. This is often the profile of organizations that perform very well on economic impact and stated purpose but are weak on inclusion, shared power, or joy.

- A **shape that changes over time** tells a story: what is progressing, what is slipping back, what may have been sacrificed for progress elsewhere.

The radar becomes particularly telling when two plots are superimposed on it: the team's self-assessment and the stakeholders' perception, or today's situation and that of a year ago. The areas where the two shapes diverge are the first to discuss.

Two precautions are in order. First, the area of a radar depends on the order of the axes: it must not be interpreted as an "overall score." Only the average, accompanied by the detail of the ten values, fulfills that role. Second, the radar is an image, and an image can seduce: it serves to open a conversation, never to close one.

The radar thus joins the emblem of Equiconscism. Like the pendulum, it does not represent a final state, but an oscillation that we learn to read. It shows where the hand must act, gently, so that the movement stays within the corridor of right measure.

In Brief

- The ten key questions favor examination over rules: they adapt to every situation because they do not contain the answer; within the cycle of conscious balance, they serve in the movement of **Discern**.
- Their wordings are canonical and apply at every level, from the person to the state: meaning and purpose, inner / outer balance, overall impact, inclusion and listening, shared responsibility, timing and cycles, power and consent, regenerative innovation, legacy and example, joy and vitality.
- Each rests on proven foundations—from Frankl and Hillel to Pigou, Arnstein, Endenburg, Holling, Fullerton, Erikson, and Spinoza—and translates into a simple practice.
- SALTER and the ten questions complement each other: SALTER reads the fractures of the present ("Where are we?"); the ten questions orient toward balance ("Toward what, and how?").
- The Ten-Question Scorecard rates each question from 1 (needs strengthening) to 5 (fully integrated); the average is read in four zones: alert, transition, emergence, balance. The SALTER scale runs in the opposite direction.
- The scorecard is a mirror, not an exam: each person scores alone and anonymously, the gaps are discussed first, the trend is followed over time, and the self-assessment is always set against the stakeholders' view.
- The conscious balance radar makes imbalances visible at a glance; like the pendulum, it is read in motion.

Notes

1. Plato, *Apology*, 38a. Our translation of the Greek *ho de anexetastos bios ou biôtos anthrôpôi*. See, for example, Platon, *Apologie de Socrate. Criton*, trans. Luc Brisson (Paris: GF-Flammarion, 1997).
2. Ravi Chaudhry, *Capitalism to Peopleism: Inspiring a Leadership Transformation* (New Delhi: Simon & Schuster India, 2024), p. 9 (boxed text).
3. Plato, *Theaetetus*, 149a–151d (Socrates's comparison of himself to a midwife and the mention of his mother, Phaenarete).

4. David Fiorucci, SALTER® — *La boussole consciente pour un monde en mutation* (Biel/Bienne: LP3 AG / SA, 2026), ISBN 978-3-9526687-1-9 (free publication, www.salter.ch). The guiding questions quoted in this chapter are those in the table in chapter 3 of the guide; SALTER content remains subject to its own terms of use.
5. Viktor E. Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2006; original German edition 1946), part 1. French translation: *Découvrir un sens à sa vie* (Montreal: Éditions de l'Homme). NB: the sentence often attributed to Frankl, "Between stimulus and response there is a space," does not appear in his works and is not used here.
6. Aaron Antonovsky, *Unraveling the Mystery of Health: How People Manage Stress and Stay Well* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1987).
7. Leo XIV, Encyclical Letter *Magnifica Humanitas* (May 15, 2026), no. 6, accessed October 16, 2026, https://www.vatican.va/content/leo-xiv/en/encyclicals/documents/20260515-magnifica-humanitas.html.
8. David Fiorucci, working notes, "L'Équilibre conscient" (2025).
9. *Pirkei Avot* (Sayings of the Fathers), 1:14, a saying attributed to Hillel the Elder (first century BCE); for the text (our translation) and its source, see chapter 12, section 12.2, note 7.
10. Edward L. Deci and Richard M. Ryan, "The 'What' and 'Why' of Goal Pursuits: Human Needs and the Self-Determination of Behavior," *Psychological Inquiry* 11, no. 4 (2000): pp. 227–268.
11. Kate Raworth, *Doughnut Economics: Seven Ways to Think Like a 21st-Century Economist* (London: Random House Business, 2017); French translation, *La Théorie du donut* (Paris: Plon, 2018). See chapters 5 and 7.
12. David Fiorucci, working notes, "L'Équilibre conscient" (2025).
13. Leo XIV, *Magnifica Humanitas*, no. 169.
14. Arthur Cecil Pigou, *The Economics of Welfare* (London: Macmillan, 1920), part II, the chapters on the divergence between marginal social net product and marginal private net product. The term "externality" became established later in the economic literature.
15. International Organization for Standardization, ISO 14040:2006, *Environmental management — Life cycle assessment — Principles and framework*, and ISO 14044:2006, *Requirements and guidelines*.
16. William Stanley Jevons, *The Coal Question* (London: Macmillan, 1865).
17. Gary Klein, "Performing a Project Premortem," *Harvard Business Review* 85, no. 9 (September 2007): pp. 18–19.
18. Chaudhry, *Capitalism to Peopleism*, p. 107: "It is obligatory upon each of us to exercise every choice we make consciously, diligently, and with full awareness of its intentional and unintentional impact on everyone else in this space."
19. Sherry R. Arnstein, "A Ladder of Citizen Participation," *Journal of the American Institute of Planners* 35, no. 4 (1969): pp. 216–224, here p. 216.
20. Chaudhry, *Capitalism to Peopleism*, p. 57. The full sentence reads: "The key criterion of a good leader is not whether he responds to the vocal majority and to lobbyists but whether he has the interest and sensitivity in listening to the views that are not articulated, as these are held by the people who have no access to the leader."
21. Fiorucci, *SALTER®*, chap. 8 (Tribalism).
22. John M. Darley and Bibb Latané, "Bystander Intervention in Emergencies: Diffusion of Responsibility," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 8, no. 4 (1968): pp. 377–383.
23. Iris Marion Young, *Responsibility for Justice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).
24. Fiorucci, *SALTER®*, chap. 9 (Evasion).
25. Leo XIV, *Magnifica Humanitas*, no. 13.
26. Ecclesiastes 3:1, NRSVue.
27. Lance H. Gunderson and C. S. Holling, eds., *Panarchy: Understanding Transformations in Human and Natural Systems* (Washington, DC: Island Press, 2002); C. S. Holling, "Understanding the Complexity of Economic, Ecological, and Social Systems," *Ecosystems* 4 (2001): pp. 390–405. See chapters 3 and 6.
28. David Fiorucci, working notes, "L'Équilibre conscient" (2025).
29. Gerard Endenburg, *Sociocracy: The Organization of Decision-Making. "No Objection" as the Principle of Sociocracy* (Delft: Eburon, 1998) (translation of a work first published in Dutch). On Kees Boeke (1884–1966) and the "Werkplaats" in Bilthoven, see the same source.
30. Chaudhry, *Capitalism to Peopleism*, p. 146: "the acquisition of the capacity by all to resist authority when it is abused."
31. Leo XIV, *Magnifica Humanitas*, no. 56.
32. David Fiorucci and Thomas Nast, *Octocratie — Redonnons du sens aux organisations* (Bern: jahr+tag, 2024), ISBN 978-3-9526038-1-9. Equiconscism®, SALTER®, LP3®, Octocracy®, and Cofluencer® are registered trademarks of LP3 AG / SA.
33. David Fiorucci, working notes, "L'Équilibre conscient" (2025).
34. John Fullerton, *Regenerative Capitalism: How Universal Principles and Patterns Will Shape Our New Economy* (Greenwich, CT: Capital Institute, April 2015), accessed September 30, 2026, https://capitalinstitute.org.
35. Bill Reed, "Shifting from 'sustainability' to regeneration," *Building Research & Information* 35, no. 6 (2007): pp. 674–680.
36. Fiorucci, *SALTER®*, chap. 15 (maturity model).
37. Erik H. Erikson, *Childhood and Society* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1950); French translation, *Enfance et société* (Neuchâtel: Delachaux et Niestlé).

38. Albert Bandura, *Social Learning Theory* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1977).
39. Chaudhry, *Capitalism to Peopleism*, p. 199.
40. Leo XIV, *Magnifica Humanitas*, no. 86 (and nos. 86–89 for the fuller development); the expression "a culture of transparency, accountability and evaluation" is taken by the encyclical from the Final Document of the Synod (no. 86, note 114).
41. Baruch Spinoza, *Ethics* (1677), part III, Definitions of the Affects, 2; our translation from the Latin (the French edition quotes the translation by Charles Appuhn, Paris: GF-Flammarion). Latin: "Laetitia est hominis transitio a minore ad majorem perfectionem."
42. Barbara L. Fredrickson, "The Role of Positive Emotions in Positive Psychology: The Broaden-and-Build Theory of Positive Emotions," *American Psychologist* 56, no. 3 (2001): pp. 218–226.
43. David Fiorucci, working notes, "L'Équilibre conscient" (2025).
44. Fiorucci, SALTER®, chap. 10 (Rupture), "Key Sentence."
45. Marilyn Strathern, "'Improving ratings': audit in the British University system," *European Review* 5, no. 3 (1997): pp. 305–321, here p. 308. Strathern's formulation: "When a measure becomes a target, it ceases to be a good measure." The original formulation by the economist Charles Goodhart (1975) is different and concerns statistical regularities used for purposes of monetary control.

PART IV

Embodying Conscious Balance

From the person to the planet, sector by sector.

CHAPTER 9

From the Person to the Planet: Conscious Balance at Every Level

> *"The part is as important as the whole. [...] The part is as much in the whole, as the whole is in the part. Neither functions without the other."*
>
> — Ravi Chaudhry, *Capitalism to Peopleism*, 2024, p. 210[1]

> *"By 'patriotism' I mean devotion to a particular place and a particular way of life, which one believes to be the best in the world but has no wish to force on other people."*
>
> — George Orwell, "Notes on Nationalism," 1945[2]

A theory is judged by what it allows us to do on Monday morning. The preceding chapters laid out the definition of conscious balance, its three dimensions, the corridor of right measure, differentiated equity, widening the gaze, the five-movement cycle, and the ten key questions (see chapters 7 and 8). It is now time to come down to the ground, to where decisions are actually made: in a mind, in a kitchen, in a workshop, in a boardroom, in a municipal hall, in a parliament, in an international forum.

This chapter is the operational heart of Equiconscism. It answers a simple question: **what does conscious balance mean at each level at which we live and act?** It does so as an explicit complement to the work of Ravi Chaudhry. In *Capitalism to Peopleism*, our friend sketches above all the macro architecture: governance, constitutions, taxation, global institutions (see chapter 5). He himself raises the question of how individual wisdom can become institutional wisdom.[3] Here Equiconscism makes its own contribution: scorecards, questions, practices, and indicators for the **micro** level (the person, the family) and the **meso** level (groups, organizations, municipalities), explicitly linked to the **macro** level (the state, international institutions).

Each level is treated according to the same framework, so that readers can move from one to the next without changing language:

1. **What is at play**: the tensions specific to that level.
2. **Conscious balance here**: the floor and the ceiling of the corridor of right measure, and what differentiated equity requires.
3. **Priority key questions**: three or four of the ten questions (with the canonical titles of chapter 8), those that "work" hardest at that level. All ten remain valid everywhere; this is an order of priority, not an exclusion.
4. **Practical steps**.

5. **Simple indicators**: few in number, understandable, chosen by the people concerned. We recall Marilyn Strathern's warning from the outset: when a measure becomes a target, it ceases to be a good measure (see chapter 14).[4]
6. **An example**: real and sourced, or illustrative and flagged as fictional.

Two principles bind the whole together. **Subsidiarity**: decide as close as possible to those concerned. **Solidarity**: leave no one outside the corridor. Neither works without the other. *Magnifica Humanitas* states this clearly, recalling that subsidiarity and solidarity are inseparable (no. 73, quoted in chapter 7, section 7.10).[5] Equiconscism shares this criterion, in its own language and on a nondenominational foundation.

One last methodological remark. Linking the levels works in both directions. A balanced person creates healthy relationships, and healthy relationships form sustainable systems. But, as David Fiorucci writes in his working texts, "a sick system always ends up making individuals sick."[6] It would be unfair, and ineffective, to make each individual bear the weight of the world's balance alone. Each level has its share of responsibility, no more and no less.

9.1 The Person: Inner Balance as the First Infrastructure

What Is at Play

Everything begins here, though not everything comes down to it. The person is the place where conscious balance is lived first: in one's body, time, attention, money, relationships, and consumer choices. It is also the place where the polycrisis is felt most intimately: information saturation, constant demands, fatigue, loneliness.

Loneliness is no minor matter. In June 2025, the WHO Commission on Social Connection estimated that about one person in six worldwide is affected by loneliness, and that loneliness and social isolation are associated with some 871,000 deaths a year (see chapter 1).[7] Conversely, a landmark meta-analysis covering 148 studies and more than 300,000 participants showed that adequate social relationships increase the likelihood of survival over the period studied by 50%, an effect comparable in size, according to the authors, to that of smoking.[8] Inner balance is therefore not a luxury for the privileged. It is a condition of health, and thus a matter of the common good.

The WHO now defines mental health as "a state of mental well-being that enables people to cope with the stresses of life, realize their abilities, learn well and work well, and contribute to their community"[9] (see also chapter 10, section 10.7). Here we find exactly the structure of conscious balance: an inner life that holds steady, an outer world to which one contributes, and a movement between the two.

Conscious Balance Here

The **floor** is that of vital needs: sleep, food, safety, relationships, a minimum of control over one's time and resources. Below it, one no longer chooses; one survives. The **ceiling** is that of exhausting excess: overactivity, overconsumption, hyperconnectivity, perfectionism, debt. Beyond it, the person burns themselves out.

Between the two, balance is not a fixed point. It is the tightrope walker who moves forward through small, corrected imbalances. There are seasons of life in which we give a great deal (a project, a newborn child, a sick parent) and seasons in which we must receive. **Differentiated equity** applies to oneself as well: what is right for a person of twenty-five is not right for a person of seventy, nor for a person with a disability, nor for a single mother. There is no universal norm for the "right" pace; there is a rightness to be rediscovered, again and again.

David Fiorucci offers a formulation that sums up what is at stake: "What exhausts us is not doing too much; it is doing without meaning."[10] Personal imbalance is not only a matter of quantity. It is often a matter of meaning and coherence.

Priority Key Questions

> **KEY QUESTION** For the Person
>
> **2. Inner / Outer Balance** — the pivotal question at this level: my needs, those of the people close to me, of society, and of the living world. **1. Meaning and Purpose** — why I do what I do. **6. Timing and Cycles** — what season of my life am I in, and what is the right rhythm? **10. Joy and Vitality** — does what I am living nourish the élan of life, or only performance?

Practical Steps

- **The daily micro-pause.** Ten to fifteen minutes of silence, walking, or breathing, without a screen. It is not a productivity technique: it is the moment when the hand takes hold of the pendulum again.
- **The three-line journal.** Every evening: what nourished me, what exhausted me, what I will adjust tomorrow. This is the cycle of conscious balance (Perceive, Listen, Discern, Adjust, Answer and Pass On) on the scale of a single day.
- **Three priorities per week**, no more, and the distinction between the urgent and the important.
- **Attention hygiene.** Reduce notifications, set a time after which screens are switched off, set aside time for long-form reading. This is the SALTER lever that moves from **Saturation to Clarity**, applied to oneself (see chapter 2).
- **The three-column budget.** Alongside "necessities" and "pleasure," a "sharing and regeneration" column (donations, socially responsible savings, buying local, repairs), however modest. The measured and shared economy begins in a wallet.
- **The question before buying.** "Do I need it, or do I want it? Can I borrow it, repair it, buy it secondhand?" Ravi Chaudhry sums up the movement: a shift from the "need to have" toward the "need to share."[11]
- **Three trusted people.** Identify three people with whom one can truly talk, and nurture those ties with at least one deep conversation a week.

For those who wish to go further, the Conscious Path offers a personal journey in five stages (The Call, The Exploration, The Alignment, The Crossing, The Handing On), presented in appendix A. It is no substitute for psychological or medical care when such care is needed.

Simple Indicators

- Hours of restorative sleep per night (weekly average).
- Leisure screen time per day, and number of screen-free evenings after a set time.
- Number of "real" conversations per week.
- Share of the budget devoted to sharing and regeneration.
- Monthly self-assessment on the ten questions (scale of 1 to 5; see chapter 8), particularly questions 2 and 10.

Example (Fictional Illustrative Case)

> **IN PRACTICE** **Claire, Nurse, 44 — Fictional Illustrative Case**
>
> Claire works 80% time on a hospital ward, is raising two teenagers on her own, and looks after her elderly mother. She describes herself as "always a day behind." Rather than adding yet another resolution, she starts from question 2 and draws her corridor: her floor (seven hours of sleep, one sit-down meal a day, one hour a week for herself) and her ceiling (no more than two extra shifts a month, no work messages after 8 p.m.). She changes nothing else for a month, but writes her three lines every evening. After four weeks, she realizes that her exhaustion stems less from the volume of work than from the absence of clear limits. She raises it with her team leader, who revises the unit's schedule. Personal balance has thus moved up to the organizational level: this is precisely what linking the levels means.

9.2 The Family: The First Place of Shared Balance

What Is at Play

The family is the first corridor we inhabit. It is there that we learn, or fail to learn, that our needs matter and that those of others matter too; that we can disagree without losing ourselves; that time is shared; that what we receive is passed on. The family is also where all the tensions of our time intersect: working hours, screens, housing, the burden of caring for children and elders, separations and blended families.

Equiconscism speaks of **families** in the plural, in all their diversity: families with or without children, single-parent, blended, extended, adoptive, chosen families. What matters, for a theory of conscious balance, is not a legal form or a doctrinal definition, but the quality of the bonds of care, commitment, and transmission that constitute them. On this point Equiconscism stands apart from any particular religious position, while sharing the observation of *Magnifica Humanitas*: "without a proper balance between work, leisure and rest, families are weakened and young people struggle to develop a sense of responsibility."[12]

Three imbalances deserve particular attention.

The unequal load. In Switzerland, according to the Federal Statistical Office, women in 2020 spent an average of 28.7 hours a week on household and family work, compared with 19.1 hours for men—about 50% more—whereas the total of paid and unpaid work was similar for both sexes.[13] As early as 1984, the sociologist Monique Haicault named the "mental load": the invisible management of household organization that weighs on a person even when tasks are shared.[14] A balance that rests silently on a single person is not a balance: it is a pendulum held at arm's length.

Screens. The WHO recommends that children under two not be exposed to sedentary screen time, and that such time be limited to no more than one hour a day between the ages of two and four—and "less is better."[15] Beyond early childhood, the point is not to demonize technology but to protect times of mutual presence, which nothing can replace.

Loyalties. The psychiatrist Ivan Boszormenyi-Nagy showed how families pass on "invisible loyalties": debts, expectations, and allegiances that run across generations.[16] They can sustain (a tradition of work well done, a sense of hospitality) or hinder (a secret, an injunction to succeed "for" one's parents). Making them visible is part of conscious balance.

Conscious Balance Here

David Fiorucci describes every living relationship as an oscillation between two poles: "autonomy and belonging. Too much autonomy leads to isolation; too much dependence leads to fusion and the loss of self."[17] A balanced family is neither a set of individuals who merely cross paths nor a fusion in which no one can become themselves.

- **Floor**: emotional and physical safety, freedom from violence, basic material needs met, at least one reliable adult for each child, dignity for every member, including elders.
- **Ceiling**: control, overprotection, overinvestment in school or sports, the permanent sacrifice of one member (often a woman, sometimes a "parentified" child), compensatory overconsumption.

Here **differentiated equity** is self-evident in daily life: an infant, a teenager, and a grandmother do not need the same things, and a parent does not give "the same thing" to each child, but to each what that child needs. Justice in the family is not arithmetic equality; it is right attention.

Priority Key Questions

> **KEY QUESTION** For the Family
>
> **2. Inner / Outer Balance** — the needs of each person and those of the family "we." **7. Power and Consent** — who decides what, and how each person, according to their age, takes part. **9. Legacy and Example** — what we are already passing on, through our actions more than our words. **10. Joy and Vitality** — is the family also a place of joy, not just of logistics?

Practical Steps

- **The family council.** Once a month, thirty minutes. Everyone, including children as soon as they can express themselves, says what is going well, what weighs on them, and what they propose. Decisions that concern everyone (vacations, screen rules, division of chores) are made by consent: we move forward when no one has a serious objection. It is a school of democracy at home.
- **The map of visible and invisible tasks.** List together everything that shared life requires, including anticipation (medical appointments, birthdays, supplies), then divide it up consciously. The mere fact of making the mental load visible often redistributes it.
- **Protected times.** One screen-free meal a day; a weekly moment "just for us"; an end-of-week ritual. These are not moral rules but fixed points that allow the pendulum to swing without running away.

- **The bridge between generations.** Regularly organize time between grandparents and grandchildren, collect life stories, learn from one another (a recipe on one side, how to use an app on the other).
- **The "letter to those who will come after."** Once a year, each adult writes down what they wish to pass on. Question 9 becomes a gesture.

Simple Indicators

- Number of screen-free shared meals per week.
- Division of household and family work hours among adults, honestly estimated twice a year.
- Frequency of contact between generations (per month).
- "Family weather check": at the monthly council, everyone rates from 1 to 5 how they feel in the family; the group discusses the gaps, not the averages.

Example (Fictional Illustrative Case)

> **IN PRACTICE** **The M. Family, Biel/Bienne — Fictional Illustrative Case**
>
> Two working parents, three children aged 7, 12, and 16, and a grandmother who lives alone twenty minutes away. The tensions concern screens and the mother's feeling that she "carries everything." The first family council produces a task map: 63 items, 41 of which she was handling alone. Three decisions are made by consent: a phone-free evening meal, the managing of appointments shared between the two parents, and every other Sunday with the grandmother, who teaches the children to garden. Six months later, the average "family weather check" has barely changed, but the gap between family members has narrowed, and it is the sixteen-year-old who proposes revisiting the screen rule for the summer. The cycle begins again: a sign that it works.

9.3 Belonging: Groups, Communities, Homeland

What Is at Play

Human beings are creatures of belonging. As early as 1943, Abraham Maslow placed the needs for belonging and love immediately after physiological and safety needs.[18] In 1995, Roy Baumeister and Mark Leary assembled a large body of evidence to argue that the need to belong is a fundamental human motivation: when it goes unmet, there are measurable effects on health, emotions, and cognition.[19] We need to be part of something: a circle of friends, a club, a religious or philosophical community, a village, a trade, a language, a homeland.

Yet belonging has a downside. Henri Tajfel's "minimal group" experiments showed that an arbitrary division into two groups is enough to produce a preference for one's own.[20] Muzafer Sherif's Robbers Cave experiment showed how quickly competition between groups breeds hostility, and that only superordinate goals—goals no group can reach on its own—truly dispel it.[21] Boris Cyrulnik has described at length how fear and the need to belong can lead ordinary people to embrace simplistic narratives, and how multiple belongings and an education in complexity protect against this drift (see chapter 1, section 1.7).[22] This is the fracture that SALTER calls **Tribalism**, whose lever is **Co-creation** (see chapter 2).

The task, then, is not to belong less. It is to belong better.

Open Patriotism, Closed Nationalism

The question of the homeland deserves particular attention, for it is here that belonging is at once most sustaining and most dangerous. In 1945, George Orwell drew a distinction that remains illuminating. Patriotism is attachment to a place and a way of life that one considers the best, without wishing to impose them on anyone; it is by its nature defensive. Nationalism, by contrast, is inseparable from the desire for power: it places its own group beyond good and evil and seeks to extend its prestige at the expense of others.[23]

Equiconscism makes this distinction its own and translates it into the terms of the corridor:

- The **floor** is rootedness: being able to love a place, a language, a history, landscapes, a way of life; feeling that one is "from somewhere." A society that scorns this attachment leaves a void that others will fill.
- The **ceiling** is closure: when love of one's own is defined against others, when belonging becomes purity, when the "we" exists only by excluding a "them."

Open patriotism is a patriotism **of contribution**, not **of demarcation**. It can be recognized by three signs: it can criticize its own country out of love for it; it grants others the right to love theirs; it measures the worth of its community by the way it treats its most vulnerable members. The Swiss Federal Constitution of 1999 enshrines this in its very preamble: the people and the cantons adopt the Constitution "in the knowledge [...] that the strength of a people is measured by the well-being of its weakest members."[24] The floor of an Equiconscist patriotism could not be better expressed.

Switzerland also offers an instructive example of belonging that rests neither on a single language, nor on a single religion, nor on a common origin, but on a will to live together, shared institutions, and a practice of democracy. What Dolf Sternberger and later Jürgen Habermas called "constitutional patriotism" (attachment to institutions and principles rather than to an ethnic group) does not exhaust one's visceral attachment to one's country, but it keeps that attachment open.[25] Ravi Chaudhry puts it in his own way: "People belong to a nation. The nation belongs to the people."[26]

In *Les Identités meurtrières*—published in English as *In the Name of Identity*—Amin Maalouf showed that each of us is made up of multiple belongings and that violence begins when a person is reduced to just one of them.[27] This may be the golden rule of conscious belonging: **recognizing the plurality of belongings in oneself and in others**.

Conscious Balance Here, Beyond the Homeland

For any group (a sports club, a religious community, a professional network, a diaspora), the same lens applies. The floor: everyone can find their place, be recognized, and be protected. The ceiling: the group does not demand exclusive loyalty, does not operate through exclusion, and does not close itself to dissent. Differentiated equity requires welcoming different degrees of commitment: the association's pillar and the occasional member both have their place.

Priority Key Questions

KEY QUESTION **For Groups, Communities, and the Homeland**

4. Inclusion and Listening — who is on the margins, who has not yet been heard, who is the group's "other"? **1. Meaning and Purpose** — does what brings us together serve the common good, or only our group? **7. Power and Consent** — is belonging freely chosen; can it be questioned; can one leave? **9. Legacy and Example** — what legacy, what values, and what practices do we want to pass on, and how are we already demonstrating them?

Practical Steps

- **Superordinate goals.** Rather than "getting to know each other" meetings, propose projects that no group can carry out alone: restoring a river, organizing a multilingual neighborhood festival, welcoming newcomers. Sherif's research, extended by Pettigrew and Tropp's meta-analysis of 515 studies, shows that contact between groups reduces prejudice modestly but robustly, and all the more so when it takes place within cooperation toward common goals.[28]
- **Embraced dual belonging.** In schools, clubs, and companies, value being "from here and from elsewhere," speaking several languages, belonging to several circles.
- **The welcoming ritual.** Every group benefits from having an explicit way of welcoming newcomers and of saying goodbye to those who leave.
- **The mirror test.** Before taking a public stance, a group can ask itself: "Does this create belonging through the content we stand for, or through demarcation against others?"
- **Celebrating without excluding.** National holidays, commemorations, and traditions are precious. They are all the richer when they are moments of invitation, not merely of gathering among one's own.

Simple Indicators

- Share of a group's members who also belong to other circles (diversity of belongings).
- Number of projects carried out with other groups, especially different ones.
- Retention rate of new members after one year (a group that welcomes poorly loses its newcomers).
- At the national level: interpersonal trust and trust in "those who think differently," measured by regular surveys.

Real-World Example

> **FOCUS** **Belonging Founded on a Shared Will**
>
> Switzerland has four national languages and, as of January 1, 2026, 2,110 municipalities; according to the Association des Communes Suisses (Swiss Association of Municipalities, ACS), 1,385 of them are German-speaking, 610 French-speaking, and 115 Italian-speaking.[29] Its common belonging rests not on uniformity but on shared institutions (federalism, direct democracy, *concordance*—the Swiss practice of power-sharing government), and on a constitutional preamble that measures the strength of a people by the fate of its weakest. This model is neither perfect nor transferable as it stands. It has known its fractures and exclusions, starting with women's right to vote, granted at the federal level only in 1971. But it shows that open patriotism is possible: a deep attachment to a country that was built, precisely, on the acceptance of difference.

9.4 Associations, Foundations, and Nonprofit Institutions

What Is at Play

Between the family and the state, between the market and the private sphere, there is a vast fabric of "intermediate bodies": sports and cultural associations, charities, foundations, housing cooperatives, churches and communities, trade unions, nongovernmental organizations. *Magnifica Humanitas*, recalling the teaching of Pius XII, sees in professional associations, labor unions, and the various intermediary organizations "an essential safeguard for civil equilibrium and for protecting the common good."[30] In Switzerland, according to the *Observatoire du bénévolat en Suisse* 2025 (Swiss volunteering survey), 41% of people aged 15 and over had volunteered formally within an association or organization in the previous twelve months, and 51% informally (helping neighbors, caring for relatives outside the household).[31] This is an immense wealth, largely invisible in the national accounts.

Yet these organizations have their own imbalances: the exhaustion of volunteers and of staff who work "out of vocation"; mission drift (one ends up serving the organization rather than its cause); dependence on a single donor; governance that is sometimes opaque or captured by a few founders; the temptation to consider oneself above reproach because one is "doing good."

Conscious Balance Here

- **Floor**: a clear mission, governance that works, transparent accounts, people (volunteers included) who are protected and recognized.
- **Ceiling**: activism that consumes its members, institutional growth for its own sake, the race for funding that dictates the agenda, a good cause that justifies bad means.

Differentiated equity requires recognizing that volunteers have neither the same availability nor the same expectations: the student who gives two hours, the retiree who gives twenty, the professional who brings a specialized skill. An Equiconscist organization knows how to welcome these different commitments without a hierarchy of merit.

Priority Key Questions

KEY QUESTION For Associations, Foundations, and Institutions

1. Meaning and Purpose — is the mission still being served, or is the organization serving itself? **5. Shared Responsibility** — how do we give an account, and to whom (beneficiaries, donors, members, the public)? **4. Inclusion and Listening** — do beneficiaries have a voice in the decisions that concern them? **6. Timing and Cycles** — does the organization know how to transform itself, merge, or even dissolve when its mission is accomplished?

Practical Steps

- **The mission test.** Once a year, the board or foundation council asks itself: "If we did not exist, who would suffer, and how?"
- **The voice of beneficiaries.** Reserve a seat or an advisory role for the people directly concerned by the mission. "Ask people what they want," writes Ravi Chaudhry.[32]
- **The volunteering charter.** Clarify what the organization asks and what it offers (training, recognition, the right to say no), and prevent burnout among the most committed.
- **Diversifying resources**, so that a single donor does not become the de facto decision-maker.
- **A governance code.** Swiss foundations have the *Swiss Foundation Code 2021*, whose fourth edition rests on four principles—effectiveness, checks and balances, transparency, and, new in this edition, social responsibility—set out in 28 recommendations.[33] It is an almost term-for-term translation of the corridor of right measure into the world of foundations.

Simple Indicators

- Share of the budget devoted directly to the mission (without making a fetish of it: investing in people is also investing in the mission).
- Turnover rate of volunteers and board members.
- Number of major decisions made with the participation of beneficiaries.
- Share of the largest donor in total resources.

Real-World Example

FOCUS The Repair Café: An Association That Also Repairs Social Ties

The first Repair Café was held in Amsterdam on October 18, 2009, on the initiative of Martine Postma, who went on to create a foundation in 2011 to support local groups. Today there are more than 2,500 worldwide.[34] The principle is simple: volunteers help residents repair their belongings. The three dimensions of Equiconscism are all there on a small scale: a measured economy (extending the life of objects), an inclusive society (learning together, across generations and backgrounds), a respected living world (less waste, fewer resources extracted). The model is light, decentralized, and replicable: an example of subsidiarity that works.

9.5 The Company: Three Sizes, Three Balances

The company is a central place for conscious balance: it is where most adults spend a large part of their waking hours, where value is created and distributed, where resources are consumed. But "the company" does not exist in the singular. A craftsperson working alone, a family-owned business of eighty people, and a group of thirty thousand employees have neither the same levers nor the same responsibilities. **Differentiated equity** applies first to organizations themselves: requiring the same procedures of all of them would be unfair to the small and too convenient for the large.

Consider the orders of magnitude. In Switzerland, according to the Federal Statistical Office's Statistics on Enterprise Structure (2021 data), 99.7% of the roughly 610,000 market enterprises were small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs, fewer than 250 jobs), and they provided about two-thirds of all jobs.[35] In the European Union, 99.8% of enterprises in the market economy were SMEs in 2023; they accounted for 63.5% of employment and generated 51.4% of value added.[36] SMEs are the backbone of our economies. They are also where Equiconscism can have the broadest effects, provided it offers tools suited to their scale.

Ravi Chaudhry observes that "most of the small and medium enterprises tend to be worthy," in the sense of his *worthy capitalists*.[37] We share this observation, adding a nuance: SMEs are often virtuous through proximity (one knows one's customers, one's employees, one's village), but they are also vulnerable through fragility (cash flow, dependence on a large customer, succession). Their conscious balance depends on protecting that proximity and reducing that fragility.

9.5.1 Microbusinesses and Craftspeople: Balance Within Reach

What Is at Play. In a microbusiness, everything rests on one person or a few. The entrepreneur is at once producer, salesperson, accountant, trainer, and sometimes social worker. The main risk is exhaustion, followed by isolation and price pressure from larger players. The main strength is the direct relationship: with the material, with the customer, with the apprentice.

Conscious Balance Here. The floor: a decent income for the entrepreneur and their employees, time for training and rest, enough cash on hand to say no to a bad contract. The ceiling: chronic overload, unwanted growth that turns a craftsperson into an unhappy manager, the race to the lowest price that destroys quality. For a microbusiness, right measure often consists in **choosing one's size** rather than growing by default.

> **KEY QUESTION** For Microbusinesses and Craftspeople
>
> **2. Inner / Outer Balance** — does the life of the business leave the entrepreneur room to live? **6. Timing and Cycles** — growing, stabilizing, handing over: where are we? **9. Legacy and Example** — apprenticeship, the craft gesture, the next generation.

Practical Steps. Set a fair price and explain it (the real cost of work well done, of repair, of the guarantee). Reserve non-billable time each week for training, maintaining tools, and reflection. Train at least one apprentice over the course of a career: passing on the craft is a form of human regeneration. Cooperate with other craftspeople (group purchasing, covering for one another, shared premises) rather than standing alone against the big players. Offer repair and maintenance, not just the sale of new products.

Simple Indicators. Hours worked per week by the entrepreneur; number of weeks of available cash; share of revenue earned from the largest customer; number of people trained; share of work devoted to repair and maintenance.

> **IN PRACTICE** **Luca's Workshop, Carpenter — Fictional Illustrative Case**
>
> Luca runs a carpentry workshop on his own, with one apprentice, in a village in the Bernese Jura. A large retailer offers him a contract that would double his revenue, at a low unit price and with tight deadlines. Running the offer through questions 2, 6, and 9, he realizes that he would have to give up training his apprentice properly and work sixty hours a week for two years. He declines, but offers the retailer a small high-end series at a fair price, and teams up with two colleagues for larger orders. His revenue grows less, his dependence decreases, and the apprentice completes his training. This is not a refusal of growth: it is the choice of measured growth.

9.5.2 SMEs: The Backbone and Its Vertebrae

What Is at Play. The SME is often family-owned, rooted in a local area, and the bearer of specialized know-how. It combines the human proximity of the small business with an organization that already has structure. Its typical challenges are succession, professionalization without bureaucratization, the digital and ecological transition with limited means, recruiting talent, and governance when the founder concentrates all decisions.

Conscious Balance Here. Floor: decent jobs, psychological safety that allows people to speak up and make mistakes, enough profitability to invest. Ceiling: excessive centralization around one person, growth through acquisitions that dilutes the culture, the externalization of costs onto subcontractors or the environment. For David Fiorucci, who has worked with many SMEs, the levers of organizational health are a common language, coherence, simplicity, and following through on what one says. He sums it up: "coherence calms the mind, and congruence nourishes trust."[38] The challenge is to distribute decisions without losing direction: this is precisely the purpose of Octocracy®, a governance approach that distributes decision rights and responsibility in organizations that want to operate neither in a purely hierarchical way nor without structure.[39]

> **KEY QUESTION** **For SMEs**
>
> **7. Power and Consent** — how can decisions be distributed beyond the founder? **5. Shared Responsibility** — how does each person carry a visible share of the results? **3. Overall Impact** — what effects on suppliers, the local area, the living world? **9. Legacy and Example** — is succession being prepared, and how?

Practical Steps. An annual two-hour workshop on the ten questions, with anonymous scoring followed by discussion of the gaps between management and teams (see chapter 14). A decision map: who decides what, who is consulted, who is informed. "Small units" accountable for their own results once an entity exceeds about fifteen people. A purchasing policy that includes local suppliers and pays on time (a simple gesture that keeps other SMEs alive). A succession plan prepared five to ten years in advance, including the handing on of the culture and not just of the shares. An explicit, openly acknowledged pay ratio between the highest and lowest salaries.

Simple Indicators. Pay ratio (between the highest and lowest compensation); absenteeism and staff turnover rates; results of the self-assessment on the ten questions (average and gaps); share of purchases made locally; average time to pay suppliers; greenhouse gas emissions from the main sources (energy, transportation).

> **FOCUS** **Freitag: Self-Management and an Openly Acknowledged Pay Ratio**
>
> Founded in Zurich in 1993 by Markus and Daniel Freitag, the company makes bags from used truck tarpaulins: the circular economy before the term existed. According to a 2019 article, this company of about 250 people adopted self-management principles inspired by holacracy in 2016, after a first attempt at decentralization had failed. It then reduced its seventeen salary levels to four transparent bands, introduced profit sharing, and set a ratio of about one to four between the lowest and highest salaries.[40] Each of these choices is open to debate. But the company illustrates several principles of Equiconscism at once: a regenerative product (materials diverted from waste), a conscious distribution of power, right proportion in pay, and the capacity to learn from failure.

9.5.3 Large Companies: Power and Its Measure

What Is at Play. The large company wields considerable power: resources to innovate, the capacity to influence its markets and suppliers, weight in public debate. Its specific risks are distance (between management and the front line, between headquarters and local areas), the tyranny of the short term imposed by certain financial markets, complexity that dilutes responsibility, and the temptation of communication rather than transformation (greenwashing and its cousins; see chapter 5).

Conscious Balance Here. Floor: full respect for the law, for human rights, and for environmental limits; decent working conditions throughout the organization, "from the CEO to the person who cleans the premises," in David Fiorucci's phrase.[41] Ceiling: maximizing a single variable (shareholder return, market share, growth), pay gaps that tear internal cohesion apart, a stranglehold on suppliers and local areas. Ravi Chaudhry has a powerful formula: a company that only makes money will henceforth be regarded as a poor company.[42]

> **KEY QUESTION** **For Large Companies**
>
> **3. Overall Impact** — consequences in the short, medium, and long term, along the entire chain. **4. Inclusion and Listening** — the voices of frontline teams, subcontractors, local residents. **7. Power and Consent** — the distribution of power among headquarters, units, and partners. **8. Regenerative Innovation** — not merely "destroying less," but regenerating.

Practical Steps. Include the quality and health of work among management's indicators of success, as *Magnifica Humanitas* also calls for.[43] Tie part of executives' variable compensation to verifiable social and ecological objectives, and not to share price alone. Set up an advisory "stakeholder council" (employees, suppliers, customers, host municipalities, environmental experts) that issues a public opinion on major decisions. Use sustainability reporting not as compliance but as a mirror. Conduct a SALTER diagnosis of internal fractures (silos, overload, evasion), then hold the ten-questions workshop in each unit.

LP3 AG / SA · Biel/Bienne · www.equiconscism.org · CC BY-NC-SA 4.0

Simple Indicators. Internal pay ratio; results of engagement and occupational health surveys, broken down by level and site; share of variable compensation tied to social and ecological objectives; emissions reduction pathway (including value chain emissions); share of revenue from regenerative products and services.

> **FOCUS Migros: A Giant Cooperative and Its "Culture Percentage"**
>
> Switzerland offers examples of large cooperative enterprises, such as Migros, Coop, or la Mobilière (Swiss Mobiliar), which belong to their members rather than to shareholders. In 1957, Migros's founder, Gottlieb Duttweiler, wrote into the articles of association a commitment to devote a share of the company's resources to culture, education, leisure, and society: this is the "Culture Percentage." In 2025, the Migros Culture Percentage committed CHF 121.7 million.[44] The cooperative model offers no immunity against economic difficulties or governance tensions, and Migros has experienced both. But it shows that a large company can write into its fundamental rules a **contribution floor** that depends neither on the economic cycle nor on the mood of a board.

9.6 Multinationals: The Value Chain as Moral Territory

What Is at Play

A multinational is not merely a large company: it is an organization whose value chain runs through dozens of countries, legal systems, and cultures. Its decisions touch people it will never see: a seamstress in Bangladesh, a miner in Congo, a community living next to a plantation. This is where widening the gaze (see chapter 7) takes on its full meaning: **those affected** and **those absent** are often thousands of kilometers away.

On April 24, 2013, the collapse of the Rana Plaza building near Dhaka, which housed garment workshops subcontracting for international brands, killed more than 1,100 people and injured more than 2,000.[45] This tragedy accelerated a regulatory movement that was already under way.

From Soft Law to Mandatory Due Diligence

- **2011: the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights**, adopted by the Human Rights Council on June 16, 2011, based on three pillars: the state duty to protect, the corporate responsibility to respect, and victims' access to remedy.[46]
- **2017: the French Duty of Vigilance Law** (*loi relative au devoir de vigilance*, Law no. 2017-399 of March 27, 2017) requires companies employing at least 5,000 people in France, or 10,000 worldwide including their subsidiaries, to draw up and implement a vigilance plan: risk mapping, procedures for assessing subsidiaries and suppliers, mitigation measures, a whistleblowing mechanism developed with the trade unions, and monitoring of effectiveness.[47] On December 5, 2023, the Paris Judicial Court (*tribunal judiciaire*) handed down the first ruling on the merits, ordering La Poste, the French postal service, to supplement its plan, which it found too general.[48]
- **2020: the Swiss Responsible Business Initiative.** On November 29, 2020, it won 50.7% of the popular vote but was approved by only 8.5 of the 23 cantons; lacking the required double majority (of the people and of the cantons), it was rejected.[49] Its indirect counterproposal, which entered into force on January 1, 2022, introduced reporting obligations into the Code of Obli-

gations, along with a due diligence duty limited to conflict minerals and child labor.[50] A new popular initiative, "Pour des grandes entreprises responsables – pour la protection de l'être humain et de l'environnement" (For responsible large companies—to protect human beings and the environment), was launched in 2025. In September 2025, the Federal Council decided to set an indirect counterproposal against it and to recommend its rejection;[51] in spring 2026 it put this counterproposal out for consultation until July 9, in the form of a federal act on sustainable corporate management.[52] What happens next is up to Parliament, and then to the people and the cantons.

- **2024: the EU Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive** (CSDDD, Directive (EU) 2024/1760) extended this duty across the Union.[53] It was subsequently revised in depth by the "Omnibus I" simplification package: after the timetable was postponed in 2025, Directive (EU) 2026/470, published in the *Official Journal* on February 26, 2026, raised the scope threshold to companies with more than 5,000 employees and more than €1.5 billion in revenue, removed the harmonized civil liability regime, removed the obligation to implement a climate transition plan, and pushed back application to July 26, 2029.[54]

This trajectory illustrates both the movement of the pendulum and its risk. The movement: in fifteen years, corporate responsibility for the value chain has gone from exhortation to obligation. The risk: regulatory runaway, followed by a backswing that may go too far in the other direction. Conscious balance is not measured by the volume of rules but by their real effects on people and the living world.

Conscious Balance Here

- **Floor**: no profit built on forced labor, child labor, endangering lives, or the irreversible destruction of ecosystems; a living wage and safe conditions throughout the chain; effective access to remedy.
- **Ceiling**: domination over suppliers and states; aggressive tax optimization that deprives local areas of their resources; the concentration of value at headquarters and of risk at the end of the chain.
- **Differentiated equity**: a multinational cannot demand of a small supplier in South Asia what it demands of a European supplier without helping it get there. Conscious due diligence is **a form of support**, not merely a control that shifts the burden onto the weakest.

Priority Key Questions

> **KEY QUESTION** For Multinationals
>
> **3. Overall Impact** — along the entire value chain, in every country. **4. Inclusion and Listening** — suppliers' workers, local communities. **5. Shared Responsibility** — who answers for what, and how is this made visible? **7. Power and Consent** — the free, prior, and informed consent of the communities concerned.

Practical Steps

- **Mapping "those absent."** For each major purchasing category, identify who is affected at the end of the chain and who has no voice in the company's decisions.

- **Accessible whistleblowing mechanisms** for suppliers' workers, in their own language, with protection against retaliation.
- **Responsible purchasing relationships.** Long-term contracts and prices that make it possible to pay living wages: ethical demands without ethical purchasing practices are a contradiction.
- **Country-by-country tax transparency**, so that every territory knows what it receives.
- **International framework agreements** with global union federations, and participation in binding sector-wide initiatives (such as the building safety accord concluded in Bangladesh after Rana Plaza).

Simple Indicators

- Share of tier 1 and tier 2 suppliers assessed and supported.
- Gap between wages paid and the estimated living wage in the main sourcing countries.
- Number of alerts received and handled, and handling time.
- Taxes paid per country relative to actual activity.

Real-World Example

> **FOCUS Tata: Philanthropic Ownership**
>
> India's Tata group offers a well-known example. According to the group itself, 66% of the share capital of Tata Sons, its holding company, is held by philanthropic trusts that support education, health, livelihood creation, and art and culture.[55] This ownership model alone does not guarantee exemplary conduct, and the group, like any organization of its size, has had its controversies and governance debates. But it shows that a multinational can be structurally oriented toward the common good: dividends flow, for the most part, to foundations. This is a **redistribution floor written into the ownership structure**, an idea that other companies (foundation-owned companies in Northern Europe, French *sociétés à mission* (mission-driven companies), Patagonia since 2022; see chapter 5) apply in their own ways.

9.7 The Municipality and the Region: Local Democracy

What Is at Play

The municipality is the political level closest to people. It is there that decisions are made about schools, roads, water, waste, playgrounds, land-use planning, and often social assistance. It is there that subsidiarity takes concrete form. In Switzerland there were 2,110 municipalities as of January 1, 2026.[56] Many of them, especially the smallest, have no parliament: the citizens themselves vote on the budget at the municipal assembly. In two cantons, Glarus and Appenzell Innerrhoden, the *Landsgemeinde* still gathers the entire electorate in the open air once a year.

Yet municipalities face growing imbalances: difficulty finding candidates for militia offices (Switzerland's militia system, in which citizens hold public office alongside their jobs), declining attendance at assemblies, the technical complexity of issues, dependence on financial transfers, tensions between urban centers and outlying areas, and conflicts over land use (housing, agriculture, nature, energy).

The region, whether a canton, a metropolitan area, or a local catchment area, is the level at which interdependencies play out: a watershed, a transportation network, or a labor market does not stop at municipal boundaries.

Conscious Balance Here

- **Floor**: basic services accessible to all (water, schools, mobility, local health care, affordable housing), quality public spaces, genuine participation.
- **Ceiling**: land take beyond the area's capacity, excessive specialization (bedroom community, overcrowded tourist resort), debt that burdens future generations, a parochialism that refuses any cooperation between municipalities.
- **Differentiated equity**: a working-class neighborhood, a mountain village, and a downtown area do not have the same needs. Participatory budgeting, for example, can weight resources according to the needs of each neighborhood.

Priority Key Questions

> **KEY QUESTION** For the Municipality and the Region
>
> **4. Inclusion and Listening** — who never comes to the assemblies, and how can they be heard? **6. Timing and Cycles** — the right rhythm between emergencies and a twenty-year vision. **8. Regenerative Innovation** — does the area come out of our decisions more alive? **7. Power and Consent** — the real place of residents in decisions.

Practical Steps

- **Participatory budgeting.** Reserve part of the capital budget for projects proposed and chosen by residents, including young people and foreign residents.
- **Mapping those absent.** Before every major project (building zone, road, school closure), identify those involved, those affected, and those absent: children, future generations, wildlife, waterways, isolated elderly people.
- **"Territorial pacts"** of three to five years between neighboring municipalities, businesses, and associations, around common objectives (mobility, energy, biodiversity).
- **Supporting the militia system.** Make municipal offices compatible with professional and family life: fair compensation, training, task sharing, recognition by employers.
- **The Equiconscism workshop in the municipal council**, once per legislative term, to review the strategy in light of the ten questions.

Simple Indicators

- Turnout at municipal assemblies and popular votes, by age group if possible.
- Share of the capital budget decided through participatory processes.
- Sealed soil area per inhabitant, and area returned to nature.
- Travel time on foot or by public transportation to basic services.
- Number of vacant militia offices.

Real-World Example

> **FOCUS Porto Alegre: The Invention of Participatory Budgeting**
>
> In 1989, the municipality of Porto Alegre, Brazil, launched participatory budgeting: residents, meeting in neighborhood and thematic assemblies, set the city's investment priorities. According to a World Bank study, participation rose from fewer than 1,000 people a year in 1990 to more than 16,000 in 1998 and about 40,000 in 1999. The share of households connected to water and sewer systems rose from 75% in 1988 to 98% in 1997.[57] The model was subsequently imitated by a great many cities around the world. But its history also holds a lesson in balance. After 2004, under different municipal majorities, the completion rate of approved projects fell sharply, and the mechanism lost part of its substance.[58] A democratic innovation that depends on a single political majority remains fragile. To last, it must be written into the rules, carried by residents themselves, and nourished by visible results.

9.8 Government and Democracy: Democratizing Democracy

What Is at Play

On November 19, 1863, at Gettysburg, Abraham Lincoln closed his address with the resolve "that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth."[59] More than one hundred sixty years later, this promise is under strain: distrust of institutions, polarization, the capture of attention by the engineers of chaos (see chapter 1), and the feeling among many citizens that decisions are being made without them.

Ravi Chaudhry places at the heart of Peopleism the idea of "democratizing democracy," that is, restoring citizenship to every citizen.[60] He states its cardinal premise: good governance emerges "not by the acquisition of authority by a few, but by the acquisition of the capacity by all to resist authority when it is abused."[61] He rejects majoritarianism: "Democracy permits majoritarianism. Peopleism denounces it."[62] And he proposes moving from "trickle-down" growth to "surge-up" growth that rises from the base.[63] That is the macro vision. Equiconscism adds a practical question: **through what concrete mechanisms can democracy become a process of conscious balance?**

Conscious Balance Here

- **Floor**: the rule of law, the separation of powers (which Montesquieu grounded in the idea that "power must check power"[64]), free elections, independent media, the protection of minorities, essential public services.
- **Ceiling**: the concentration of power, the tyranny of the majority, demagoguery, electoral short-termism that sacrifices future generations, but also the overload of consultations that wears citizens out.
- **Differentiated equity**: not all voices are equally audible. A conscious democracy goes looking for those who do not speak up. Ravi Chaudhry makes this listening a criterion of good leadership (see chapter 8, question 4).[65]

Three Families of Mechanisms

Direct democracy. Switzerland practices it on a large scale. At the federal level, 100,000 citizens can propose an amendment to the Constitution by collecting their signatures within eighteen months; 50,000 signatures collected within one hundred days are enough to put a law passed by Parliament to a popular vote.[66] Citizens thus vote several times a year on specific issues. This system has its limits: variable turnout, the influence of campaign money, the complexity of some issues. But it produces a remarkable balancing effect. It obliges the authorities to anticipate the people's view, it pushes toward compromise (*concordance*), and it makes every citizen a co-legislator. The double majority of the people and the cantons, which we saw at work in 2020 on responsible business (see section 9.6), is itself a mechanism for balancing numbers against the diversity of territories—debatable in its effects, but conscious in its intent.

Deliberative democracy. Citizens' assemblies selected by lot allow ordinary people to inform themselves, deliberate, and make recommendations. In Ireland, the Citizens' Assembly (2016–2018) brought together 99 citizens chosen by lot, chaired by a Supreme Court judge. Among other things, it recommended revising the constitutional provision on abortion; the referendum of May 25, 2018, approved the change by 66.4%, with a turnout of 64%.[67] In France, the *Convention citoyenne pour le climat* (Citizens' Convention for Climate) brought together 150 citizens chosen by lot from October 2019 to June 2020 and drew up 149 proposals. The president of the Republic had promised to pass them on "without filter"; in February 2021, the Convention's members gave the government a score of 3.3 out of 10 for its uptake of their proposals.[68] Both experiences teach the same lesson: citizen deliberation is powerful when its **link to the decision** is clear and respected; it becomes a source of disillusionment when it is not. This is exactly question 4: giving those absent a voice "that truly influences the decision."

Representing future generations. In 2015 Wales adopted a law on the well-being of future generations (*Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act*), which sets seven well-being goals, requires public bodies to follow five ways of working (long term, prevention, integration, collaboration, involvement), and establishes a Future Generations Commissioner.[69] Other countries have adopted so-called "wellbeing budgets" (see chapter 5). These mechanisms give an institutional place to what Equiconscism calls **those absent**.

Priority Key Questions

> **KEY QUESTION** For Government and Democracy
>
> **7. Power and Consent** — the distribution of powers and the quality of consent. **4. Inclusion and Listening** — unexpressed voices, minorities, future generations. **6. Timing and Cycles** — the long term versus the electoral calendar. **5. Shared Responsibility** — giving an account in a visible and verifiable way.

Practical Steps

- **A "future generations test"** for every major bill: what effects in thirty years?
- **Citizens' assemblies with a clear mandate**, with a public commitment by the government to follow up on each recommendation, with reasons given in case of refusal.
- **Well-being indicators** published with the budget, alongside GDP (see chapter 14).

- **Living civic education**: student councils, youth parliaments, mock popular votes.
- **The right of intermediate bodies to be consulted**, which Switzerland practices through its consultation procedure (such as the 2026 consultation mentioned in section 9.6).
- **Protecting the public information space**: support for independent journalism, transparency in the financing of campaigns and of online political advertising.

Simple Indicators

- Voter turnout in elections and popular votes, broken down by age and income level.
- Trust in institutions (regular surveys).
- Share of recommendations from participatory mechanisms actually implemented.
- Existence and resources of an institution responsible for future generations.

9.9 International Institutions and Multilateralism

What Is at Play

Some balances can be held only at the scale of the planet: the climate, ocean biodiversity, peace, global health, the regulation of artificial intelligence, the taxation of mobile activities. No state, no company, no person can guarantee them alone. This is the macro level par excellence, the one where Ravi Chaudhry focuses much of his thinking, up to the idea of global institutions freed from the veto.[70]

Yet multilateralism is going through a deep crisis: paralysis of the Security Council, the withdrawal of certain states from treaties and organizations, a return of the logic of power that Giuliano da Empoli describes in *L'heure des prédateurs* [The Hour of the Predators] (see chapter 1). The "balance" spoken of in that context is all too often the balance of power or of deterrence. Equiconscism defends another kind of balance: not a frozen power relationship, but a balance of care and rightness (see chapter 7).

What Multilateralism Has Achieved

It would be unfair to see only the failures. The Montreal Protocol, signed in 1987, organized the phase-out of substances that deplete the ozone layer. In January 2023, the UN-backed scientific assessment panel found that nearly 99% of these substances had been phased out and that the ozone layer should return to its 1980 values around 2040 globally, around 2045 over the Arctic, and around 2066 over the Antarctic.[71] It is a textbook case of conscious balance at the planetary scale: perceive (science detected the danger), listen (the countries of the South obtained a support fund), discern (differentiated timetables), adjust (successive amendments), answer and pass on (regular scientific monitoring).

On September 22, 2024, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the **Pact for the Future**, comprising 56 actions across five areas (sustainable development and financing for development, peace and security, science and technology, youth and future generations, transforming global governance), together with two annexes: the Global Digital Compact and the Declaration on Future Generations.[72] It was adopted by consensus, despite objections from a few states. Like any text of its kind, it will be worth only as much as its implementation. But the Declaration on Future

Generations writes into the language of the UN a central idea of Equiconscism: those absent today have a claim on today's decisions. The seventeen Sustainable Development Goals, adopted in 2015 for the 2030 horizon, provide its measurement framework (see appendix C).

Conscious Balance Here

- **Floor**: respect for international law and human rights, protection of the global commons (climate, oceans, ozone, biodiversity), solidarity with the most vulnerable countries and populations.
- **Ceiling**: domination by a few powers, bureaucracy cut off from local realities, one-size-fits-all solutions that disregard context.
- **Differentiated equity**: the principle of "common but differentiated responsibilities," enshrined in the 1992 United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, is its legal expression. All countries are responsible; not all are responsible in the same way or with the same means.

Priority Key Questions

> **KEY QUESTION** For International Institutions
>
> **3. Overall Impact** — by definition. **5. Shared Responsibility** — who does what, and how is it accounted for? **4. Inclusion and Listening** — the voice of small states, Indigenous peoples, young people. **9. Legacy and Example** — what will we leave as a legacy to the next century?

Practical Steps

Multilateralism is not reserved for diplomats. Every level can contribute:

- **Networks of cities and regions** (for climate, water, the reception of newcomers), which bring international cooperation to life at the local level.
- **Companies** that voluntarily apply the most demanding international standards, even where local law is less strict.
- **Citizens**, through their votes on their country's international commitments, their support for solidarity organizations, and their consumption and savings choices.
- **States** that explicitly link their national policies to the Sustainable Development Goals and publish their progress.

Switzerland, as host country of International Geneva, has a particular responsibility and opportunity here: to offer a place for dialogue, mediation, and "good offices," in keeping with its tradition.

Simple Indicators

- Progress on the Sustainable Development Goals, country by country (voluntary national reviews).
- Official development assistance as a share of gross national income.
- Number of environmental and human rights treaties ratified and actually applied.
- Participation of young people and civil society in national delegations.

9.10 Summary Table of the Levels

The table below summarizes the levels. It does not replace the preceding discussion; it serves as a reminder for a workshop or for personal reflection.

Level	What Is at Play	Floor (threshold of dignity and viability)	Ceiling (threshold of excess)	Priority Key Questions	One Flagship Practice	One Simple Indicator
Person	Health, time, attention, money, relationships	Sleep, safety, relationships, minimal control over one's time	Overactivity, hyperconnectivity, overconsumption	2, 1, 6, 10	Daily micropause and three-line journal	"Real" conversations per week
Family	Care, shared load, passing on, screens	Emotional safety, freedom from violence, one reliable adult per child	Control, sacrifice of one member, fusion	2, 7, 9, 10	Monthly family council by consent	Division of household work hours
Belonging and homeland	Need to belong, temptation of closure	Rootedness, recognition, protection	Nationalism, exclusion, exclusive loyalty	4, 1, 7, 9	Superordinate-goal projects between groups	Diversity of members' belongings
Associations and foundations	Mission, volunteering, governance	Clear mission, transparency, protection of people	Activist burnout, mission drift	1, 5, 4, 6	Beneficiaries' voice in decisions	Largest donor's share of resources
Microbusinesses and craftspeople	Autonomy, exhaustion, fair price	Decent income, time for rest and training	Unwanted growth, dependence on one customer	2, 6, 9	Weekly non-billable time	Weeks of available cash
SMEs	Proximity, succession, distribution of power	Decent jobs, psychological safety	Centralization around one person, externalization of costs	7, 5, 3, 9	Annual ten-questions workshop	Internal pay ratio
Large companies	Power, distance, short-termism	The law, human rights, decent work everywhere	Maximizing a single variable, excessive pay gaps	3, 4, 7, 8	Stakeholder council	Share of variable compensation tied to social and ecological objectives
Multinationals	Global value chain	No forced or child labor, living wage, access to remedy	Domination of suppliers and states, aggressive tax optimization	3, 4, 5, 7	Mapping those absent along the chain	Gap to the living wage at suppliers
Municipality and region	Proximity, militia system, land, services	Accessible basic services, genuine participation	Land take, debt, parochialism	4, 6, 8, 7	Participatory budgeting	Assembly attendance by age

Level	What Is at Play	Floor (threshold of dignity and viability)	Ceiling (threshold of excess)	Priority Key Questions	One Flagship Practice	One Simple Indicator
Government and democracy	Trust, polarization, the long term	Rule of law, separation of powers, protected minorities	Concentration of power, majoritarianism, short-termism	7, 4, 6, 5	Citizens' assemblies with a clear mandate	Share of citizen recommendations implemented
International institutions	Global commons, peace	International law, protection of the commons, solidarity	Domination by a few powers, uniformization	3, 5, 4, 9	Networked cooperation among cities and regions	Progress on the Sustainable Development Goals

Three observations emerge from this table.

First observation: no question belongs to a single level. Question 4 (Inclusion and Listening) appears at almost every level from the group upward. Question 7 (Power and Consent) runs through the family, the SME, the multinational, and the state. This is proof that the ten questions form a common grammar: the same language is spoken at the kitchen table and in the boardroom.

Second observation: the floor and the ceiling change in content, not in logic. At every level, the floor protects dignity and viability, and the ceiling protects against the excess that exhausts people, tears social bonds apart, or exceeds the limits of the living world. This is the corridor of right measure, applied without dogmatism.

Third observation: the levels hold one another up. Claire cannot regain her balance if her hospital does not revise its schedules; the M. family cannot share the load if employers ignore family life; the SME cannot pay fair prices if large contractors crush its margins; the municipality cannot regenerate its land if the region and the state do not set the framework; and no state can protect the climate on its own. This is what Ravi Chaudhry expresses through his principle of interconnected holism, and it is why we placed it in the epigraph: the part is as much in the whole as the whole is in the part. Equiconscism asks no one to save the world alone. It asks each of us, at every level, to hold our share of the pendulum, and to reach out a hand to the other levels.

> *"It is obligatory upon each of us to exercise every choice we make consciously, diligently, and with full awareness of its intentional and unintentional impact on everyone else in this space."*
>
> — Ravi Chaudhry, *Capitalism to Peopleism*, 2024, p. 107[73]

In Brief

- Conscious balance applies at **every level** (the person, the family, forms of belonging, associations, companies of all sizes, multinationals, municipalities, states, international institutions) according to the same framework: what is at play, floor and ceiling, priority key questions, practices, simple indicators.

- **The micro and meso levels** are Equiconscism's own terrain, complementing Ravi Chaudhry's macro-level work: where he draws the architecture, Equiconscism offers concrete ways of keeping one's footing within it, in motion.
- **The family** is the first corridor we inhabit: balance there depends on making the mental load visible, on decision by consent, on protected times, and on the bridge between generations.
- **Belonging** is a fundamental human need: Equiconscism champions an **open patriotism**, one of contribution rather than demarcation, which measures the strength of the community by the fate of its most vulnerable members, against a closed nationalism.
- **Differentiated equity** also applies to organizations: a microbusiness, an SME, and a multinational have neither the same levers nor the same responsibilities; due diligence along value chains must support the weakest, not shift the burden onto them.
- **Democratizing democracy** requires concrete mechanisms (direct democracy, citizens' assemblies with a clear mandate, representation of future generations), whose success depends on a real link to the decision.
- **The levels hold one another up**: a sick system makes people sick, and conscious people can heal a system. Each of us holds our share of the pendulum.

Notes

1. Ravi Chaudhry, *Capitalism to Peopleism: Inspiring a Leadership Transformation* (New Delhi: Simon & Schuster India, 2024), p. 210. The omitted sentence reads: "Every part is an indivisible part of the whole." Pagination of the printed edition, to be checked against a bound copy before printing.
2. George Orwell, "Notes on Nationalism," *Polemic*, no. 1, London, October 1945 (online text: The Orwell Foundation, accessed September 30, 2026, https://www.orwellfoundation.com/the-orwell-foundation/orwell/essays-and-other-works/notes-on-nationalism/).
3. Chaudhry, *Capitalism to Peopleism*, pp. 113–114, where he takes up Peter Senge's question: "Can Individual Wisdom Transcend to Institutional Wisdom?"
4. Marilyn Strathern, "'Improving ratings': audit in the British University system," *European Review* 5, no. 3 (1997): pp. 305–321. The common formulation of "Goodhart's law" is Strathern's, after Charles Goodhart (1975).
5. Leo XIV, Encyclical Letter *Magnifica Humanitas* (May 15, 2026), no. 73, accessed October 16, 2026, https://www.vatican.va/content/leo-xiv/en/encyclicals/documents/20260515-magnifica-humanitas.html.
6. David Fiorucci, working texts for *L'Équilibre conscient* (2025), unpublished. The full statement: "A balanced individual creates healthy relationships; healthy relationships form sustainable systems. And conversely, a sick system always ends up making individuals sick."
7. World Health Organization, Commission on Social Connection, *From loneliness to social connection: charting a path to healthier societies*, report published June 30, 2025, accessed September 30, 2026, https://www.who.int/groups/commission-on-social-connection.
8. Julianne Holt-Lunstad, Timothy B. Smith, and J. Bradley Layton, "Social Relationships and Mortality Risk: A Meta-analytic Review," *PLoS Medicine* 7, no. 7 (2010): e1000316 (148 studies, 308,849 participants; OR = 1.50).
9. World Health Organization, "Mental health," fact sheet (first published in June 2022 as "Mental health: strengthening our response"), accessed October 16, 2026, https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/mental-health-strengthening-our-response; the French edition quotes the French version of the same fact sheet. Same wording as in chapter 10 (note 40).
10. David Fiorucci, working texts for *L'Équilibre conscient* (2025), chapter "Santé mentale," unpublished.
11. Chaudhry, *Capitalism to Peopleism*, p. 157: "It is a shift from the 'need to have' towards the 'need to share'."
12. *Magnifica Humanitas*, no. 169. On the family, the encyclical also sets out a conception specific to Catholic doctrine (no. 165), which Equiconscism, as a nondenominational theory, does not adopt as its own.
13. Federal Statistical Office (FSO), unpaid work survey 2020 (Swiss Labour Force Survey, "Unpaid work" module), results published in 2021, reported by Swissinfo, "Tâches domestiques: les femmes en font toujours 50% de plus que les hommes," 2021, accessed September 30, 2026.
14. Monique Haicault, "La gestion ordinaire de la vie en deux," *Sociologie du travail* 26, no. 3 (1984): pp. 268–277.

15. World Health Organization, *Guidelines on physical activity, sedentary behaviour and sleep for children under 5 years of age* (Geneva, 2019); news release "To grow up healthy, children need to sit less and play more," April 24, 2019, accessed September 30, 2026, https://www.who.int/news/item/24-04-2019-to-grow-up-healthy-children-need-to-sit-less-and-play-more.
16. Ivan Boszormenyi-Nagy and Geraldine M. Spark, *Invisible Loyalties: Reciprocity in Intergenerational Family Therapy* (New York: Harper & Row, 1973).
17. David Fiorucci, *Équiconscisme*, working document (2025), section "Les relations humaines: entre autonomie et interdépendance," unpublished.
18. Abraham H. Maslow, "A Theory of Human Motivation," *Psychological Review* 50, no. 4 (1943): pp. 370–396.
19. Roy F. Baumeister and Mark R. Leary, "The Need to Belong: Desire for Interpersonal Attachments as a Fundamental Human Motivation," *Psychological Bulletin* 117, no. 3 (1995): pp. 497–529.
20. Henri Tajfel, "Experiments in Intergroup Discrimination," *Scientific American* 223, no. 5 (1970): pp. 96–102; Henri Tajfel, Michael Billig, R. P. Bundy, and Claude Flament, "Social categorization and intergroup behaviour," *European Journal of Social Psychology* 1, no. 2 (1971): pp. 149–178.
21. Muzafer Sherif, O. J. Harvey, B. Jack White, William R. Hood, and Carolyn W. Sherif, *Intergroup Conflict and Cooperation: The Robbers Cave Experiment* (Norman: University of Oklahoma, 1961).
22. See in particular Boris Cyrulnik, *Un merveilleux malheur* (Paris: Odile Jacob, 1999), on resilience; and *Le Laboureur et les mangeurs de vent* (Paris: Odile Jacob, 2022), on inner freedom in the face of totalitarian narratives. Paraphrased synthesis, with no direct quotation.
23. Orwell, "Notes on Nationalism." Paraphrase of the distinction between patriotism ("of its nature defensive") and nationalism ("inseparable from the desire for power").
24. Federal Constitution of the Swiss Confederation of April 18, 1999 (SR 101), preamble: "in the knowledge that only those who use their freedom remain free, and that the strength of a people is measured by the well-being of its weakest members" (English translation on fedlex.admin.ch, accessed October 16, 2026, https://www.fedlex.admin.ch/eli/cc/1999/404/en; the English version has no legal force, the binding languages being German, French, and Italian).
25. The expression *Verfassungspatriotismus* (constitutional patriotism) was coined by Dolf Sternberger in an article in the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* (May 23, 1979) and popularized by Jürgen Habermas, notably in *Écrits politiques* (French trans. Christian Bouchindhomme and Rainer Rochlitz, Paris: Cerf, 1990).
26. Chaudhry, *Capitalism to Peopleism*, p. 230. The passage continues: "This is the real meaning of Peopleism."
27. Amin Maalouf, *Les Identités meurtrières* (Paris: Grasset, 1998).
28. Thomas F. Pettigrew and Linda R. Tropp, "A Meta-Analytic Test of Intergroup Contact Theory," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 90, no. 5 (2006): pp. 751–783 (515 studies, 713 independent samples).
29. Association des Communes Suisses, "Statistique des communes actualisée pour l'année 2026," January 6, 2026, accessed September 30, 2026, https://www.chgemeinden.ch/fr/newsroom/beitrag/2026_01_06_Statistique-des-communes-actualis-e-pour-l-ann-e-2026.php, based on the FSO's official register of municipalities.
30. *Magnifica Humanitas*, no. 32, which summarizes the teaching of Pius XII (Christmas radio messages).
31. Adrian Fischer, Markus Lamprecht, and Hanspeter Stamm, *Observatoire du bénévolat en Suisse 2025* (Zurich and Geneva: Seismo, 2025), published by the Société suisse d'utilité publique (SSUP); rate of 41% (formal volunteering in the previous twelve months, fig. 3.1) (survey conducted from March to June 2024 among some 5,000 people), accessed September 30, 2026, https://freiwilligenmonitor.ch/wp-content/uploads/2025/08/Freiwilligen_Monitor_FR.pdf.
32. Chaudhry, *Capitalism to Peopleism*, p. 131: "Ask people what they want, they will be more than willing to tell you."
33. Thomas Sprecher, Philipp Egger, and Georg von Schnurbein, *Swiss Foundation Code 2021* (Bern: Stämpfli, 2021) (French ed. ISBN 978-3-7272-7791-7), published for SwissFoundations; SwissFoundations, "Le Swiss Foundation Code 2021", accessed September 30, 2026, https://www.swissfoundations.ch/fr/actualites/swiss-foundation-code-2021/.
34. Repair Café International Foundation, "About Repair Café", accessed September 30, 2026, https://www.repaircafe.org/en/about/.
35. Federal Statistical Office, Statistics on Enterprise Structure (STATENT), 2021 data, presented in "Les PME recrutent à nouveau," *La Vie économique*, March 2024, accessed September 30, 2026, https://dievolkswirtschaft.ch/fr/2024/03/les-pme-recrutent-a-nouveau/; the same figures (609,518 market enterprises, 99.7% SMEs, about two-thirds of jobs in full-time equivalents, STATENT 2021 data) appear in Alexander Fust et al., *Schweizer KMU. Eine Analyse der aktuellsten Zahlen*, OBT and KMU-HSG, 2024, pp. 4 and 9, posted on January 18, 2025, on the Swiss Confederation's SME portal, accessed September 30, 2026, https://www.kmu.admin.ch/fr/faits-et-chiffres-sur-les-pme-en-suisse.
36. Eurostat, "Structural business statistics overview," *Statistics Explained*, 2023 data, accessed September 30, 2026, https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Structural_business_statistics_overview.
37. Chaudhry, *Capitalism to Peopleism*, p. 142.
38. David Fiorucci, "L'impact conscient: le point de rencontre entre santé mentale et leadership LP3," LP3 working document, October 2025.
39. David Fiorucci and Thomas Nast, *Octocratie — Redonnons du sens aux organisations* (Bern: jahr+tag, 2024), ISBN 978-3-9526038-1-9. Equiconscism®, SALTER®, LP3®, Octocracy®, and Cofluencer® are registered trademarks of LP3 AG / SA.

40. Corporate Rebels, "At Freitag: 'We Have Radically Simplified Our Salary Scales,'" 2019, accessed September 30, 2026, https://www.corporate-rebels.com/blog/freitag-we-have-radically-simplified-our-salary-scales; Freitag, "Our history" (https://www.freitag.ch/en/history). Figures self-reported by the company and not audited.
41. Fiorucci, "L'impact conscient."
42. Chaudhry, *Capitalism to Peopleism*, p. 101: "A company that only makes money shall hereafter be considered a poor company."
43. *Magnifica Humanitas*, no. 156: "there needs to be a corporate commitment to include quality and dignity of work among its indicators of success."
44. Migros, *Rapport de gestion 2025*, section "Engagement Migros", accessed September 30, 2026, https://report.migros.ch/2025/fr/engagement-migros: Migros Culture Percentage, CHF 121.7 million in 2025, out of a total voluntary commitment of CHF 138 million (including the Pioneer Fund and the Support Fund). On its inclusion in the articles of association in 1957: Migros, "L'engagement de Migros pour la culture: pour-cent culturel, quelques chiffres", accessed September 30, 2026, https://engagement.migros.ch/fr/stories/promotion-de-la-culture/pour-cent-culturel-quelques-chiffres.
45. Public Eye, "Bangladesh: effondrement du Rana Plaza", accessed September 30, 2026, https://www.publiceye.ch/fr/thematiques/industrie-textile/sante-et-securite-au-travail/securite-des-batiments/rana-plaza. Published death tolls range from 1,127 to 1,138 depending on the source.
46. United Nations Human Rights Council, resolution 17/4 of June 16, 2011; *Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights: Implementing the United Nations "Protect, Respect and Remedy" Framework* (New York and Geneva: OHCHR, 2011).
47. Loi no. 2017-399 du 27 mars 2017 relative au devoir de vigilance des sociétés mères et des entreprises donneuses d'ordre, *JORF*, March 28, 2017; art. L. 225-102-4 of the French Commercial Code (*Code de commerce*). Direction générale du Trésor, "Devoir de vigilance des sociétés mères et des entreprises donneuses d'ordre," May 9, 2017.
48. Tribunal judiciaire de Paris, judgment of December 5, 2023 (Fédération SUD PTT v. La Poste); see CCI Paris Île-de-France, CREDA, "Devoir de vigilance: premières précisions sur le fond du tribunal judiciaire de Paris," accessed September 30, 2026.
49. Popular vote of November 29, 2020, on the popular initiative "Entreprises responsables – pour protéger l'être humain et l'environnement": 50.73% yes, 8.5 cantons in favor and 14.5 against, turnout of 47.04% (official results of the Federal Chancellery, reproduced by Swissvotes, Année politique suisse, University of Bern, item no. 636, accessed September 30, 2026, https://swissvotes.ch/vote/636.00).
50. Code of Obligations, art. 964a ff. (in force since January 1, 2022); economiesuisse, "Entreprises responsables: le contre-projet indirect entre en vigueur," accessed September 30, 2026.
51. Federal Office of Justice, press release of April 2, 2026, cited in the following note: "In September 2025, the Federal Council decided to set an indirect counterproposal against the popular initiative 'Pour des grandes entreprises responsables – pour la protection de l'être humain et de l'environnement'" (our translation); the counterproposal is "designed as an indirect counterproposal to the initiative for responsible multinationals, which it proposes to reject" (our translation).
52. Federal Office of Justice, press release "Nouvelle loi sur la gestion durable des entreprises: pour mieux protéger les droits de l'homme et l'environnement, et soulager les PME," April 2, 2026; consultation open until July 9, 2026, accessed September 30, 2026, https://www.bj.admin.ch/fr/newnsb/UDalr4CV5UX2_sLwdBHN_.
53. Directive (EU) 2024/1760 of the European Parliament and of the Council of June 13, 2024, on corporate sustainability due diligence, *OJ L*, July 5, 2024.
54. Directive (EU) 2026/470 of the European Parliament and of the Council of February 24, 2026 ("Omnibus I"), *OJ L*, February 26, 2026 (accessed September 30, 2026, https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/dir/2026/470/oj; recitals 46, 47, and 49: application from July 26, 2029, removal of the provisions on the climate transition plan and of the harmonized civil liability regime), in force since March 18, 2026; adopted by the European Parliament on December 16, 2025, and by the Council on February 24, 2026. See Latham & Watkins, "EU Sustainability Omnibus Published in the Official Journal," February 2026; Linklaters, "EU Omnibus I Directive published in the Official Journal of the EU," February 26, 2026 (both accessed September 30, 2026). Recital 51 postpones by one year the CSDDD transposition deadline, which had already been pushed back to July 26, 2027, by Directive (EU) 2025/794: it is now set at July 26, 2028.
55. Tata Group, "Tata Sons", accessed September 30, 2026, https://www.tata.com/business/tata-sons.
56. Association des Communes Suisses, "Statistique des communes actualisée pour l'année 2026."
57. World Bank, *Empowerment Case Studies: Participatory Budgeting in Brazil* (Washington, n.d.), accessed September 30, 2026, https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/600841468017069677/pdf/514180WP0BR0Bu10Box342027B01PUBLIC1.pdf.
58. Teresa R. Melgar, "A Time of Closure? Participatory Budgeting in Porto Alegre, Brazil, after the Workers' Party Era," *Journal of Latin American Studies* 46, no. 1 (2014): pp. 121–149, doi:10.1017/S0022216X13001582.
59. Abraham Lincoln, Gettysburg Address, November 19, 1863, the so-called "Bliss copy."
60. Chaudhry, *Capitalism to Peopleism*, p. 146: "Peopleism is a way of governance that restores citizenship to every citizen of the country by democratizing democracy."
61. Ibid., p. 146: "good governance in a society emerges not by the acquisition of authority by a few, but by the acquisition of the capacity by all to resist authority when it is abused."
62. Ibid., p. 165: "Democracy permits majoritarianism. Peopleism denounces it; it focuses on all people […]"
63. Ibid., p. 163: "'surge-up' economic growth models as distinct from the 'trickle-down growth' models."
64. Montesquieu, *De l'esprit des lois* (Geneva: Barrillot et fils, 1748), book XI, chapter 4 (our translation). Original: "Pour qu'on ne puisse abuser du pouvoir, il faut que, par la disposition des choses, le pouvoir arrête le pouvoir."

65. Chaudhry, *Capitalism to Peopleism*, p. 57: "listening to the views that are not articulated, as these are held by the people who have no access to the leader."
66. Federal Constitution of the Swiss Confederation, art. 139 (popular initiative) and art. 141 (optional referendum).
67. Citizens' Assembly (Ireland), *First Report and Recommendations of the Citizens' Assembly: The Eighth Amendment of the Constitution*, recommendations voted in April 2017, report submitted to Parliament (Oireachtas) on June 29, 2017; composition (99 members chosen by lot and a chairperson, Justice Mary Laffoy), accessed September 30, 2026, https://citizensassembly.ie; official results of the referendum of May 25, 2018 (Thirty-sixth Amendment): 66.4% yes, turnout of 64.1%.
68. Convention citoyenne pour le climat, *Rapport final*, June 2020; evaluation vote of February 26–28, 2021 (average score of 3.3/10 for the uptake of the proposals), see France 24, "La Convention citoyenne pour le climat met une très mauvaise note au gouvernement," February 28, 2021, accessed September 30, 2026.
69. *Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015*; Welsh Government, "Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015: the essentials", accessed September 30, 2026, https://www.gov.wales/well-being-future-generations-act-essentials-html.
70. Chaudhry, *Capitalism to Peopleism*, pp. 11 and 33 (paraphrase).
71. United Nations, "Ozone layer recovery is on track, due to success of Montreal Protocol," UN News, January 2023, based on the *Scientific Assessment of Ozone Depletion: 2022* (WMO, UNEP, NOAA, NASA, European Commission), accessed September 30, 2026, https://news.un.org/en/story/2023/01/1132277.
72. United Nations General Assembly, resolution A/RES/79/1, "The Pact for the Future," September 22, 2024, with the Global Digital Compact and the Declaration on Future Generations annexed, accessed September 30, 2026, https://www.un.org/en/summit-of-the-future/pact-for-the-future.
73. Chaudhry, *Capitalism to Peopleism*, p. 107.

CHAPTER 10

Sectors and Professions: Conscious Balance in Practice

> *"Craftsmanship names an enduring, basic human impulse, the desire to do a job well for its own sake."*
>
> — Richard Sennett, *The Craftsman* (2008)[1]

Chapter 9 followed conscious balance from the person to the planet, level by level. This chapter changes axis. It no longer climbs the ladder of levels; it cuts across the professions. For every sector has its own pendulum. The pendulum of a newsroom does not swing between the same extremes as that of a farm, a courthouse, or an insurance company. The floors are not the same, and neither are the ceilings. This follows directly from differentiated equity (see chapter 7): what is right for a bank is not what is right for a cabinetmaker's workshop, and what is right for a dense city is not what is right for a mountain valley.

For each of the twenty fields covered, we step in turn into the shoes of a specialist: a journalist, an energy engineer, a judge, a physician, an agronomist, a banker, an insurer, a craftsperson, an urban planner, a religious leader. Each section follows the same framework, so that you can compare fields and, above all, transfer the approach to your own:

- **the current imbalance**, established by one or two recent, sourced data points;
- **conscious balance**, described as a corridor of right measure, with its **floor** (the level below which dignity, essential needs, or viability are no longer secured) and its **ceiling** (the level above which excess exhausts people, tears the social fabric, or exceeds the limits of the living world);
- **three leading key questions**, chosen from the ten in chapter 8 and given under their canonical titles;
- **three real practices or examples**, from Switzerland, Europe, or elsewhere, documented in the notes;
- **one** simple **indicator** to track over time.

Two words of caution are in order. First, none of the examples cited is a finished model or a label. Each has its limits, which we point out when they are known: a cooperative can go bankrupt, a tourist tax can be contested, an ambitious law can be poorly applied. These examples show only that the corridor can be traveled, that ordinary women and men have already taken it. Second, an indicator is never more than a flashlight. As soon as it becomes a target, it risks ceasing to shed

light (this is how Marilyn Strathern restated "Goodhart's law"; see chapter 14). We therefore propose indicators to feed the cycle of conscious balance—Perceive, Listen, Discern, Adjust, Answer and Pass On—not to replace it.

One question runs through every profession. David Fiorucci puts it this way: "Does this nourish life or destroy it?"[2] It is simple to the point of naïveté, and that is its strength. It exempts no one from expertise. It reminds every form of expertise what it serves.

10.1 Communication and Media

The Current Imbalance. An editor-in-chief sees it every day: never has information been so abundant, and never has it been so fragile. According to the Reuters Institute's *Digital News Report 2025* (48 markets), overall trust in news has stalled at 40% for the third year in a row; 40% of respondents say they sometimes or often avoid the news (up from 29% in 2017), and 58% are worried about being unable to tell what is real from what is fake online.[3] Meanwhile, the economic indicator of Reporters Without Borders' World Press Freedom Index fell in 2025 to its lowest level ever, and for the first time the global situation was classified as "difficult."[4] The attention economy (see chapter 1) has shifted value from accuracy to capture. This is the fracture SALTER calls *Saturation*, whose lever is *Clarity* (see chapter 2).

Conscious Balance. Information is not a commodity like any other: it is a common good on which a society's capacity to deliberate depends. The encyclical *Magnifica Humanitas* says so in its own language: "Only the shared pursuit of the veracity of facts, perceived as a common good, can provide a solid foundation for just communication."[5] The pendulum of journalism swings between speed and verification, between audience and accuracy, between outrage and understanding.

- **Floor**: access for everyone to information that is verified, pluralistic, understandable, and local; the safety and independence of journalists; media literacy education from the earliest school years.
- **Ceiling**: constant solicitation, concentration of ownership, targeted advertising that exploits vulnerabilities, and sensationalism that makes the news so toxic that people flee it.

Three Leading Key Questions.

- **Meaning and Purpose** (question 1)—are we informing in order to enlighten, or in order to capture?
- **Inclusion and Listening** (question 4)—which regions, which social groups, which generations are missing from the stories and from the newsrooms?
- **Power and Consent** (question 7)—who owns the media outlet, who sets the editorial line, and which algorithm decides what we see?

Three Practices or Examples.

1. *Republik* (Zurich). Launched on January 14, 2018, after a crowdfunding campaign in the spring of 2017, this ad-free digital magazine belongs to the Project R cooperative; its readers are its only customers.[6] The model remains fragile, but it shows that a direct relationship with the public can replace the race for clicks.

2. The Journalism Trust Initiative. Launched by Reporters Without Borders and published in December 2019 by the European Committee for Standardization (CWA 17493), it sets out verifiable criteria of journalistic reliability: transparency about ownership, sources of funding, and correction procedures.[7] The European Media Freedom Act (EMFA), applicable since August 8, 2025, points in the same direction at the legislative level.[8]
3. Media literacy education in Finland. Embedded in a national policy (updated in 2019) that makes it systematic from early childhood through secondary school, it has earned the country a place—alongside Denmark, Ireland, and the Netherlands—at the top of the Media Literacy Index 2026.[9]

One Indicator. The share of a media outlet's revenue that comes directly from its audience (subscriptions, donations, memberships), supplemented by the number of corrections published in a visible way. The first measures independence; the second, honesty.

10.2 Digital Technologies

The Current Imbalance. A computer systems architect would begin by pointing out that the "cloud" is very material. The International Energy Agency estimates that data centers consumed about 415 TWh in 2024, roughly 1.5% of the world's electricity, and that this consumption could more than double to some 945 TWh by 2030, driven in particular by artificial intelligence.[10] At the other end of the chain, the world produced 62 million metric tons of electronic waste in 2022, of which only 22% was formally recycled.[11] To these physical costs are added less visible human ones: attentional fatigue, dependency, surveillance, disinformation.

Conscious Balance. Digital technology is a multiplier. It amplifies whatever we entrust to it: access to knowledge and isolation, cooperation and manipulation. Conscious balance consists neither in rejecting it nor in letting it grow without measure, but in putting it back in its place as a means. Faced with an "incessant flow of information," *Magnifica Humanitas* calls for "a genuinely healthy attitude."[12] In the language of SALTER, this is the shift from *Artificiality* to *Embodied Presence*. The issues specific to artificial intelligence are addressed in chapter 13.

- **Floor**: digital inclusion (access, skills, accessibility for people with disabilities and older people), data protection, security, and public services that remain reachable offline.
- **Ceiling**: the capture of attention and data, dependence on a handful of platforms, accelerated obsolescence, and an energy and material footprint out of proportion to usefulness.

Three Leading Key Questions.

- **Inner / Outer Balance** (question 2)—do our tools serve our lives, or do our lives serve our tools?
- **Power and Consent** (question 7)—is consent to the terms of use real, or is it, to borrow a phrase from *Magnifica Humanitas* (no. 56), "only an apparent consensus"?
- **Overall Impact** (question 3)—what does this service cost in electricity, water, metals, and waste, and who bears that cost?

Three Practices or Examples.

1. The Fairphone 5 (Netherlands). Released in September 2023, this modular phone has ten spare parts that users can replace themselves, comes with a five-year warranty, and has been promised updates until at least 2031.[13] Lifespan becomes a design property rather than a matter of chance.
2. The right to disconnect (France). Introduced by the law of August 8, 2016, and in force since January 1, 2017, it requires companies with at least fifty employees to negotiate the terms on which digital tools are used or, failing an agreement, to adopt a charter.[14] The rule is modest; its merit is to make rest time a subject of social dialogue.
3. The EU Digital Services Act (DSA). Fully applicable since February 17, 2024, it requires very large platforms in particular to assess and mitigate the systemic risks they pose to fundamental rights, public debate, and mental health.[15] In Switzerland, the revised Federal Act on Data Protection, in force since September 1, 2023, pursues a similar aim for personal data.

One Indicator. The average service life of an organization's digital equipment (in years). Lengthening it reduces costs, waste, and material footprint all at once; it is one of the most effective steps toward digital sufficiency.

10.3 Transportation and Mobility

The Current Imbalance. A mobility engineer would start with a Swiss figure. In 2024, transportation emitted 13.4 million metric tons of CO_2 equivalent, or 33.5% of national greenhouse gas emissions, not counting international aviation; that is barely 10% less than in 1990, whereas the buildings sector has cut its emissions by 47%.[16] Worldwide, roads kill about 1.19 million people every year, according to the World Health Organization.[17] Mobility is a freedom; it is also one of the sectors where the runaway pendulum is most visible: congestion, noise, pollution, urban sprawl.

Conscious Balance. Getting around is not an end in itself; it is a means of access—to a job, to health care, to education, to loved ones. Conscious balance therefore seeks neither to maximize miles traveled nor to ban them, but to guarantee access with as little harm as possible. Differentiated equity comes fully into play here: a resident of an Alpine valley does not have the same needs as a resident of Geneva. The debate remains lively, as shown by the rejection of the national highway expansion on November 24, 2024, by 52.7% of voters.[18]

- **Floor**: access to essential services for people without a car, older people, young people, people with disabilities, and those living on the periphery; safety for everyone, beginning with the most vulnerable.
- **Ceiling**: emissions, deaths and injuries, noise, the piecemeal sprawl of building across the landscape, time lost in traffic jams.

Three Leading Key Questions.

- **Overall Impact** (question 3)—what is the real cost of a trip, for health, the climate, and the landscape?
- **Inclusion and Listening** (question 4)—do children, pedestrians, and older people have a say in planning?

- **Timing and Cycles** (question 6)—a piece of infrastructure lasts a century: for what future needs are we building it?

Three Practices or Examples.

1. Shifting freight from road to rail (Switzerland). Since the Alpine Initiative was accepted in 1994, this shift has been written into the Constitution; it has been supported by the performance-related heavy vehicle charge (2001) and by the New Rail Link through the Alps (Gotthard Base Tunnel, 2016). Rail now carries about three-quarters of transalpine freight; the legal target of 650,000 truck crossings a year, however, has not yet been reached.[19]
2. The *Deutschlandticket* (Germany). Launched on May 1, 2023, this single pass gives access to all regional and local public transportation in the country for a fixed monthly price (€63 since January 2026). It has about 14.5 million users, and the federal government estimates the CO_2 savings at some 2.5 million metric tons a year.[20]
3. Pontevedra (Spain). Since 1999, this midsize city in Galicia has given its center back to pedestrians and made low speeds the norm. Accidents involving pedestrians fell from 69 in 1999 to 4 in 2013.[21] A municipal decision, made as close as possible to the people concerned, changed everyday life.

One Indicator. The share of trips made on foot, by bicycle, or by public transportation, tracked together with the number of people killed or seriously injured. The first figure speaks to sufficiency; the second, to the human price we still accept.

10.4 Energy

The Current Imbalance. An energy engineer would speak of a twofold imbalance. First, one of excess: according to the International Energy Agency, global energy-related CO_2 emissions reached a new record of about 38.4 billion metric tons in 2025, even though their growth is slowing (+0.4%).[22] Then, one of shortage: in 2023, more than 666 million people still lived without electricity, about 85% of them in sub-Saharan Africa, and some 2.1 billion cooked with polluting fuels.[23] Europe itself is not spared: in 2024, 9.2% of the population of the European Union could not keep their homes adequately warm.[24]

Conscious Balance. Energy is the raw material of every other activity; that is why its corridor is so demanding. The floor and the ceiling are visible to the naked eye: too little energy means cold, darkness, isolation; too much fossil energy means climate disruption. Between the two, conscious balance combines three moves, in this order: sufficiency (not consuming what is not useful), efficiency (making better use of what we consume), and renewables (producing differently what remains necessary). It is wary of the rebound effect: a more efficient technology can increase total consumption if nothing keeps it in check.

- **Floor**: universal access to clean and affordable energy (Sustainable Development Goal 7), and protection for households in energy poverty.
- **Ceiling**: the carbon budget compatible with climate commitments, damage to landscapes and biodiversity, dependence on distant suppliers.

Three Leading Key Questions.

- **Overall Impact** (question 3)—where does our energy come from, and who pays the consequences?
- **Regenerative Innovation** (question 8)—can our installations restore soils, jobs, and local self-reliance?
- **Power and Consent** (question 7)—are the residents affected by a wind or solar farm merely its neighbors, or also its co-owners and co-decision-makers?

Three Practices or Examples.

1. Middelgrunden (Copenhagen). Commissioned in 2001, this 40 MW offshore wind farm (twenty 2 MW turbines) is owned half by a cooperative, which today has nearly 8,000 members, and half by a power company (today Ørsted).[25] Shared ownership eased local acceptance: those who see the turbines are also those who benefit from them.
2. The 2000-Watt Society (Switzerland). This vision sets a concrete benchmark: an average power consumption of 2,000 watts per person. The city of Zurich wrote it into its municipal charter by popular vote on November 30, 2008 (76.4% in favor), together with the complementary goal of one metric ton of CO_2 per person per year by 2050.[26] The corridor becomes a figure everyone can understand.
3. The energy transition through direct democracy (Switzerland). The Energy Strategy 2050 was accepted on May 21, 2017 (58.2%), the Climate and Innovation Act on June 18, 2023 (59.1%, climate neutrality by 2050), and the Federal Act on a Secure Electricity Supply from Renewable Energy Sources on June 9, 2024 (68.7%).[27] The latter notably paves the way for local electricity communities, which allow neighbors to share their solar production.

One Indicator. Average power consumed per person (in continuous watts), together with the share from renewable sources. For an organization, one can track the energy consumed per unit of service provided.

10.5 Education and Training

The Current Imbalance. A school principal would point out that academic results are only a symptom. The OECD's PISA 2022 survey nevertheless recorded a marked drop in the average of member countries compared with 2018: about 15 points in mathematics and around 10 points in reading.[28] The pandemic does not explain everything: in several countries, the decline had begun earlier. Behind the averages are students who drop out, teachers who are exhausted, families who are worried, and a school system called upon to fix everything at once.

Conscious Balance. Education is, par excellence, the realm of handing on, and therefore of the long term. Its pendulum swings between transmitting knowledge and awakening individuals, between high standards and kindness, between competition and cooperation. David Fiorucci sums up the desired direction: "In education, this means learning cooperation before competition."[29] Differentiated equity is decisive here: treating all students the same way often means leaving the most fragile by the wayside. An experienced teacher knows this: the student who needs more time is not less capable; that student is moving at a different pace. Conscious balance, at school,

consists in holding together common standards and differentiated paths, without letting either become a pretext for abandoning the other. It applies to adults as well: lifelong learning has become a condition of dignity in a world of work that changes fast.

- **Floor**: for every child and every adult in training, basic skills (reading, writing, arithmetic, reasoning, cooperating), safety, a sense of belonging, and access to a recognized qualification.
- **Ceiling**: pressure from constant assessment, overloaded curricula and timetables, hyperconnectivity, the reduction of education to employability alone.

Three Leading Key Questions.

- **Legacy and Example** (question 9)—what are we passing on through the very way we teach?
- **Inclusion and Listening** (question 4)—are students, and especially those who fail, listened to in the design of the school?
- **Joy and Vitality** (question 10)—does school still give students a taste for learning?

Three Practices or Examples.

1. Dual vocational education and training (Switzerland). A majority of young people, about two-thirds according to the Confederation, choose after compulsory schooling an apprenticeship that combines a host company and a vocational school; bridges (the Federal Vocational Baccalaureate, universities of applied sciences) keep pathways open.[30] Hand and head are recognized as equal in dignity, which echoes Sennett's reflection (see section 10.15).
2. Multidisciplinary learning modules (Finland). Since 2016, when the national curriculum adopted in 2014 took effect, every school must offer each year at least one period of teaching organized around a phenomenon or theme that cuts across several disciplines, with students taking part in its design.[31]
3. Education for sustainable development (Switzerland and UNESCO). Integrated into the regional curricula (the *Plan d'études romand* in French-speaking Switzerland, *Lehrplan 21* in German-speaking Switzerland) and supported by the éducation21 foundation, it is in line with the UNESCO Recommendation on Education for Peace, Human Rights and Sustainable Development adopted in November 2023.[32] It teaches students to think in terms of interdependence: exactly what widening the gaze means.

One Indicator. The proportion of 25-year-olds holding an upper-secondary (secondary level II) qualification (the Confederation and the cantons aim for 95%), tracked together with the share of students who say they feel they belong at school. The first figure tells us whether we are leaving no one behind; the second, whether joy is being lost along the way.

10.6 Justice

The Current Imbalance. A judge knows this: justice is measured not only by the number of judgments handed down but by the trust it inspires. Yet the World Justice Project's Rule of Law Index 2025, covering 143 countries, shows that the rule of law declined in 68% of them (compared with 57% in 2024); this is the eighth consecutive year in which declines have outnumbered improvements.[33] On top of this come more everyday ills: long and costly proceedings, victims who feel forgotten, and reoffending that reminds us that punishment alone does not repair.

Conscious Balance. The scales of our emblem are first of all the scales of justice. But scales that merely weigh offense against punishment see only part of the scene. Restorative justice widens the gaze: it attends to the harm done, to the needs of the people affected, and to the responsibility of the offender, and it invites victim, offender, and community—voluntarily and with a trained facilitator—to seek together what can be repaired. It does not replace criminal justice; it complements it. A criminal defense lawyer would point out that it requires safeguards: the free consent of both parties, the offender's acknowledgment of the facts, the possibility of withdrawing at any time, and the absence of any pressure on the victim. *Magnifica Humanitas* describes justice as assuming "a restorative dimension" that "aims to mend broken bonds and reintegrate those who have been excluded."[34]

- **Floor**: access to the courts for everyone, a fair trial, the presumption of innocence, reasonable time frames, protection of and information for victims.
- **Ceiling**: overcriminalization, incarceration as the default response, summary or opaque justice (including algorithmic justice), trial by media taking the place of judgment.

Three Leading Key Questions.

- **Inclusion and Listening** (question 4)—has the victim been heard as something other than a witness?
- **Shared Responsibility** (question 5)—has the offender been able to understand and own the consequences of the act, and has the community taken its share in reintegration?
- **Regenerative Innovation** (question 8)—does the judicial response repair relationships, or does it merely inflict a penalty?

Three Practices or Examples.

1. Family group conferences (New Zealand). Since the Children, Young Persons, and Their Families Act of 1989, juvenile offenses that are not settled by a simple police measure are, in principle, dealt with through *family group conferences* that bring together the young person, the extended family, the victim, and public services, inspired by Māori practices.[35]
2. Restorative justice written into criminal procedure (France). Since the law of August 15, 2014, Article 10-1 of the Code of Criminal Procedure allows a restorative justice measure to be offered to the victim and the offender, at every stage of the proceedings, with their consent.[36]
3. Mediation in juvenile criminal procedure (Switzerland). The Swiss Juvenile Criminal Procedure Code, in force since 2011, allows proceedings to be suspended so that mediation between the minor and the victim can be attempted.[37] Systematic reviews of the research indicate that restorative meetings moderately reduce reoffending and produce high satisfaction among victims.[38]

One Indicator. The three-year reoffending rate, tracked together with victims' satisfaction with the way they were heard. A justice system that punishes without bringing peace, or that brings peace without preventing harm, has gone only halfway.

10.7 Health and Mental Health

The Current Imbalance. A public health physician would begin with mental health, long the poor relation. In September 2025, the World Health Organization estimated that more than a billion people were living with a mental health condition; depression and anxiety alone cost the global economy about US$1 trillion a year, while governments devote a median of only 2% of their health budgets to mental health.[39] Health care workers themselves are burning out, and in wealthy countries the costs of health systems are rising faster than the wealth that funds them.

Conscious Balance. According to the WHO, "mental health is a state of mental well-being that enables people to cope with the stresses of life, realize their abilities, learn well and work well, and contribute to their community."[40] Health is not a strictly individual matter: the One Health approach, adopted by the FAO, UNEP, the WHO, and the World Organisation for Animal Health, is defined as an integrated approach that aims "to sustainably balance and optimize the health of people, animals and ecosystems."[41] The word *balance* is in the very definition. It applies to organizations too. As David Fiorucci points out, a sick system eventually makes individuals sick (see chapter 9):[42] organizational health is a condition of people's health, not an optional extra.

- **Floor**: access for everyone to essential care, including mental health care, without financial ruin; prevention; working conditions that do not make people ill.
- **Ceiling**: overmedicalization and the race to perform more procedures, team burnout, a headlong rush into technology at the expense of the relationship, costs that exclude.

Three Leading Key Questions.

- **Inner / Outer Balance** (question 2)—how can we reconcile the needs of patients, caregivers, and the system?
- **Overall Impact** (question 3)—do our human health practices take animal and environmental health into account?
- **Shared Responsibility** (question 5)—who in the organization answers for the mental health of the teams?

Three Practices or Examples.

1. The Swiss Strategy on Antibiotic Resistance (StAR). Launched in 2016, it brings together human medicine, veterinary medicine, agriculture, and the environment; it continues in a One Health action plan for 2024–2027.[43] Antibiotic resistance cannot be fought in just one of these fields.
2. Buurtzorg (Netherlands). Founded in 2006 by the nurse Jos de Blok, this home-care organization works through autonomous teams of no more than about a dozen nurses, each responsible for the patients of one neighborhood, with minimal management.[44] The trust placed in caregivers translates into quality of care, and the model attracts interest far beyond the Netherlands.
3. The WHO guidelines on mental health at work (September 28, 2022). They recommend acting first on how work is organized, then training managers and workers, and facilitating return to work.[45] That is the right order: fix the system before asking individuals to "hang in there."

One Indicator. For an organization: the balance between resources and demands as perceived by employees, measured regularly through an anonymous survey and tracked together with the rate of long-term absence. For a region: healthy life expectancy.

10.8 Environment and Climate

The Current Imbalance. A climate scientist no longer needs to raise her voice; the data speak for themselves. The World Meteorological Organization has confirmed that 2024 was the warmest year on record, at about 1.55°C (±0.13°C) above the 1850–1900 average.[46] The 2025 *Planetary Health Check* concludes that seven of the nine planetary boundaries have now been transgressed, with ocean acidification the latest to join the list.[47] The full diagnosis is set out in chapter 1; here, let us simply note that the ecological ceiling is no longer a hypothetical.

Conscious Balance. This is the field in which the corridor of right measure comes closest to Kate Raworth's Doughnut: an ecological ceiling and a social foundation. But conscious balance adds two requirements. First, it is not content with reducing harm: it aims at regeneration (the sixth principle; see chapter 7). Second, it holds climate justice in view: those who have contributed least to the problem often suffer its effects the most. A climate scientist would add an expert's caveat: the climate responds with inertia. The gases emitted today will act for decades—for centuries, in the case of part of the CO_2. The climate pendulum therefore cannot be corrected at the last minute; each year of delay narrows the range of adjustments still possible and raises their human cost. That is why adaptation and emissions reduction are not opposed: we need both, at the same time.

- **Floor**: protection of the most exposed people and ecosystems, adaptation, justice toward the countries and generations who pay for others.
- **Ceiling**: the planetary boundaries, first and foremost the carbon budget compatible with the Paris Agreement.

Three Leading Key Questions.

- **Overall Impact** (question 3)—what are our emissions, direct and indirect, and our damage to ecosystems?
- **Shared Responsibility** (question 5)—who answers for these impacts, and how is that made visible?
- **Timing and Cycles** (question 6)—are today's decisions compatible with the climate in which our grandchildren will live?

Three Practices or Examples.

1. The *KlimaSeniorinnen* judgment (European Court of Human Rights). On April 9, 2024, the Grand Chamber ruled that Switzerland had violated the right to respect for private and family life (Article 8 of the Convention) by failing to take sufficient measures against climate change.[48] An association of older women made the voice of those most vulnerable to heat heard through the law.
2. The advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice (July 23, 2025). At the request of the United Nations General Assembly, the Court clarified the obligations of states with respect to

the protection of the climate system.[49] The climate is entering international law as a responsibility, no longer merely as a voluntary commitment.

3. The EU Nature Restoration Regulation (2024/1991). In force since August 18, 2024, it provides that restoration measures must cover at least 20% of the Union's land and sea areas by 2030, and all ecosystems in need of restoration by 2050; member states were to submit their national plans in September 2026.[50] It is one of the first laws to aim explicitly at regeneration, and not merely at limiting damage.

One Indicator. The greenhouse gas emissions of an organization or a region (direct and indirect, across the whole value chain), compared with a trajectory compatible with 1.5°C, tracked together with the land and sea areas actually restored.

10.9 Wildlife and the Animal World

The Current Imbalance. A conservation biologist would present two curves. The first is that of the Living Planet Index: according to the 2024 report by WWF and the Zoological Society of London, the average size of monitored wildlife populations fell by 73% between 1970 and 2020, and by 85% in freshwater habitats.[51] The second is that of threatened species: in 2019, IPBES estimated that about a million animal and plant species were threatened with extinction.[52] Added to these losses is the question of how farm animals are treated—animals whose numbers run into the tens of billions every year.

Conscious Balance. Animals are foremost among "those absent" from our decisions: they do not vote, do not sign contracts, do not take the floor at general meetings. Yet science has made great strides. The Cambridge Declaration on Consciousness (July 7, 2012) already affirmed that humans are not alone in possessing the neurological substrates of consciousness.[53] The New York Declaration on Animal Consciousness (April 19, 2024) goes further: it finds "strong scientific support" for attributing conscious experience to mammals and birds, and at least "a realistic possibility" of it in all vertebrates and many invertebrates (cephalopods, decapod crustaceans, insects). It draws a practical conclusion: "when there is a realistic possibility of conscious experience in an animal, it is irresponsible to ignore that possibility in decisions affecting that animal."[54] This is widening the gaze applied to the non-human living world, without sentimentality or anthropomorphism: each species has its own needs, and differentiated equity applies to them as well.

- **Floor**: no avoidable suffering; respect for the needs specific to each species (movement, social life, natural behaviors); preservation of habitats and ecological corridors.
- **Ceiling**: overexploitation, animal farming that reduces the animal to a unit of production, the fragmentation and pollution of habitats.

Three Leading Key Questions.

- **Inclusion and Listening** (question 4)—who speaks for the animals affected by our decision?
- **Overall Impact** (question 3)—what consequences do our purchases, our construction projects, and our leisure activities have on wildlife?
- **Regenerative Innovation** (question 8)—can we give space back to the living world, and not merely take less of it?

Three Practices or Examples.

1. The dignity of animals in Swiss law. The Federal Constitution requires that account be taken of the dignity of living beings in the field of gene technology (Art. 120, para. 2), and the Animal Welfare Act (2005) has as its purpose to protect the dignity and welfare of animals; Switzerland was also a pioneer in phasing out battery cages for laying hens.[55]
2. The UK's animal sentience law (2022). The *Animal Welfare (Sentience) Act* explicitly recognizes the sentience of decapod crustaceans and cephalopods, and creates a committee charged with assessing the effect of government policy on animal welfare; the government must respond publicly to its reports.[56]
3. The Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (December 2022). Adopted by the parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, it sets, among other things, the target of conserving at least 30% of land and sea areas by 2030 and restoring 30% of degraded ecosystems.[57]

One Indicator. For an organization: the share of its purchases of animal products that come from high-welfare farms, and the share of the land it manages that is landscaped to support biodiversity. For a region: population trends of indicator species.

10.10 Common Resources: Water, Air, Soil, Forests, Land, and Landscape

The Current Imbalance. A hydrologist and an air quality specialist would reach the same conclusion: what belongs to everyone is often protected by no one. In 2024, 2.1 billion people still lacked access to safely managed drinking water.[58] According to the WHO, 99% of the world's population lived in 2019 in places where air quality did not meet its guidelines, and ambient and household air pollution together are associated with 6.7 million premature deaths a year.[59] Soils, which take centuries to form, are being sealed and depleted in a few decades.

Conscious Balance. *Magnifica Humanitas* recalls that "the earth's goods — soil, water, air and natural resources — are given by God to the entire human family to sustain the lives of all," both now and in the future.[60] Without sharing this theological foundation, Equiconscism converges on the criterion: these goods are held in common, and their use must be governed over the long term. Elinor Ostrom, winner of the Nobel Prize in Economics in 2009, showed that communities can manage common resources sustainably without privatizing them or handing them over to the state, provided they give themselves clear rules, adapted to the place, monitored, and revisable by the users themselves (see chapter 4).

- **Floor**: access for every person to safe water, healthy air, fertile soil, and a livable landscape.
- **Ceiling**: withdrawals greater than renewal, the sealing and paving of soils, persistent pollutants, the piecemeal sprawl of building across the landscape.

Three Leading Key Questions.

- **Power and Consent** (question 7)—who decides how the resource is used, and do the users take part in making the rules?
- **Timing and Cycles** (question 6)—are we drawing on the resource at the pace at which it renews itself?

- **Legacy and Example** (question 9)—in what state will we hand on this spring, this forest, this landscape?

Three Practices or Examples.

1. The communal alpine pastures of Törbel (Valais). Ostrom cites this village as an example of the sustainable management of a commons over several centuries, drawing on the study by the anthropologist Robert Netting with the telling title *Balancing on an Alp* (1981): an old rule there prohibited, among other things, sending more cows to the summer pasture than one could feed through the winter.[61] The ceiling was written into custom.
2. The rights of nature. In New Zealand, the Act of March 20, 2017, on the Whanganui River provides that *Te Awa Tupua*, the river as a living whole, "is a legal person"; it is represented by two guardians, one appointed by the Māori *iwi*, the other by the Crown.[62] In Ecuador, the 2008 Constitution recognizes that nature, or *Pacha Mama*, has the right to integral respect for its existence and "to the maintenance and regeneration of its life cycles, structure, functions, and evolutionary processes" (Art. 71, our translation).[63] The application of these rights remains uneven, but the legal gaze has changed.
3. The revision of the Spatial Planning Act (Switzerland). Accepted on March 3, 2013, by 62.9% of voters, it limits building zones to foreseeable needs over the following fifteen years in order to curb the sprawl of building across the land.[64] Soil is treated as a finite resource.

One Indicator. For a region: the area of newly sealed soil per inhabitant per year, tracked together with the ratio of water withdrawals to the available renewable resource.

10.11 Agriculture and Food

The Current Imbalance. An agronomist would place two figures side by side. In 2022, according to the United Nations Environment Programme, 1.05 billion metric tons of food were wasted (132 kg per person, 60% of it in households), while 783 million people were going hungry.[65] And food systems, from production to consumption, accounted in 2015 for about 34% of global anthropogenic greenhouse gas emissions.[66] Excess and scarcity coexist within the same system: that is the very signature of an imbalance.

Conscious Balance. Agriculture is the human activity most directly bound up with the living world; it can exhaust it or regenerate it. Farmers are at once producers of food, stewards of soil, water, and landscapes, and often the first victims of climate hazards and price pressure. The "Input – Put-Put – Output" illustration (see chapter 7) takes on its full meaning here: the egg exists only if the hen, the henhouse, and the living process are respected. An agronomist would add that soil is not a mere substrate: it is a living ecosystem, teeming with organisms, whose fertility is built slowly and lost quickly.

- **Floor**: every person's right to sufficient, healthy, and culturally appropriate food; a decent income for those who produce it; living soils.
- **Ceiling**: excessive inputs, losses and waste, emissions, the disappearance of hedgerows, pollinators, and small farms.

Three Leading Key Questions.

- **Regenerative Innovation** (question 8)—do our practices rebuild soil fertility and biodiversity?
- **Timing and Cycles** (question 6)—do we respect the rhythm of the seasons, of crop rotations, of fallow periods?
- **Inner / Outer Balance** (question 2)—how can we reconcile farmers' incomes, prices for consumers, and the health of ecosystems?

Three Practices or Examples.

1. Food security in the Constitution (Switzerland). On September 24, 2017, 78.7% of voters accepted Article 104a, which links food security to the preservation of farmland, to production that is adapted to local conditions and uses resources efficiently, and to a use of foodstuffs that conserves resources.[67] Direct payments to agriculture, for their part, have been tied since the late 1990s to meeting ecological performance requirements.
2. Les Jardins de Cocagne (Geneva). Born in 1978 out of a market-garden cooperative experiment launched by some thirty people and a gardener, this cooperative is one of Europe's pioneers of community-supported agriculture: more than 400 households receive a basket of organic vegetables every week and take part in the fieldwork.[68] The direct link between those who produce and those who eat replaces the anonymity of the market.
3. Community-managed natural farming (Andhra Pradesh, India). Launched in 2015–2016 by the state of Andhra Pradesh and run by the public body Rythu Sadhikara Samstha, this program now brings together more than 1.77 million farmers on more than 0.9 million hectares, in more than 8,000 villages.[69] It relies on peer-to-peer learning, particularly among women's groups.

One Indicator. The share of food produced or purchased that is lost or wasted, from field to plate. For a farm: the organic matter content of the soil, tracked from year to year.

10.12 Finance and Banking

The Current Imbalance. A clear-sighted banker would begin with debt. According to the Institute of International Finance, global debt exceeded US$365 trillion in the first half of 2026, or about 305% of world gross domestic product;[70] this figure includes the debt of the financial sector, which explains the gap with the IMF measure cited in chapter 1 (public and private nonfinancial debt). The banker would go on to the direction of credit: according to the *Banking on Climate Chaos 2026* report, published by a coalition of nongovernmental organizations, the world's 65 largest banks committed about US$8.7 trillion to the fossil fuel industry over ten years.[71] Money is a formidable lever; it can lift up or crush.

Conscious Balance. Finance is a means in the service of the real economy, and the economy a means in the service of life. *Magnifica Humanitas* puts it plainly: "The social function of credit remains irreplaceable. Finance for its own sake is fundamentally different from finance aimed at the development, creation and evolution of work."[72] Ravi Chaudhry adds, from the entrepreneur's

point of view: “Responsible Entrepreneurship is not about making less money”; it is about being fully accountable for ensuring that the money being made is “neither at the cost of nature, nor at the cost of any part of the society.”[73]

- **Floor**: access for everyone to basic financial services, credit for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and for useful projects, the security of savings, the stability of the system.
- **Ceiling**: excessive debt, leverage and speculation disconnected from the real economy, the financing of activities that destroy the living world, return requirements incompatible with the long term.

Three Leading Key Questions.

- **Meaning and Purpose** (question 1)—what does our money actually finance, and what purpose does it serve?
- **Overall Impact** (question 3)—what ecological and social consequences do our loans and investments produce, directly and indirectly?
- **Shared Responsibility** (question 5)—do savers know what their bank does with their money, and can they answer for it?

Three Practices or Examples.

1. WIR Bank (Switzerland). Founded in 1934 by sixteen cooperative members in response to the Great Depression, this cooperative circulates a complementary currency, the WIR, among thousands of SMEs, alongside the Swiss franc. Research by the economist James Stodder suggests that its use increases when the economy slows down, giving it a stabilizing role.[74] A currency can be a tool of solidarity among local businesses.
2. Values-based banks. The Alternative Bank Switzerland, founded in 1990, finances exclusively ecological and social projects and publishes the list of its loans; it is a member of the Global Alliance for Banking on Values, which brings together banks from around the world on these principles.[75] The large cooperative banks, such as Raiffeisen in Switzerland, remind us for their part that a bank can belong to its customers.
3. Sustainability classifications and scores. The EU taxonomy (Regulation 2020/852) defines the economic activities considered environmentally sustainable; in Switzerland, the Swiss Climate Scores, presented by the Federal Council in 2022, make it possible to compare how well investments are aligned with climate goals.[76] These tools do not replace discernment, but they make visible what was hidden.

One Indicator. The share of loans and investments that are aligned with a climate trajectory compatible with 1.5°C and devoted to the real economy, published in a transparent and verifiable way.

10.13 Insurance

The Current Imbalance. An actuary would say it bluntly: the climate is changing the price of risk. According to the reinsurer Munich Re, natural disasters caused about US$224 billion in damage in 2025, of which some US$108 billion was insured; about half of the losses were therefore not cov-

ered (the average over the past ten years is about 60%).[77] The Los Angeles wildfires of January 2025 were by themselves the costliest disaster of the year. In some regions, insurers are pulling out; households are discovering that their homes are becoming uninsurable.

Conscious Balance. Insurance occupies a singular place in the economy: it puts a price on risk. That price is a signal. If it is right, it encourages people to build elsewhere, or differently, and to prevent rather than repair. Insurance also rests on pooling: the many who suffer no loss pay for the few who do. It is a form of institutionalized differentiated equity, with long-standing cooperative and mutual origins. But pooling weakens when data make it possible to sort risks to the extreme, or when losses become so frequent that they are no longer a matter of chance. For an insurer, conscious balance then consists in holding two requirements together: a price of risk right enough to encourage prevention, and solidarity broad enough that no one is left alone in the face of hazard.

- **Floor**: insurability of housing, health, crops, and work tools for everyone, including in the most exposed areas and for the most exposed people.
- **Ceiling**: premiums that soar to the point of exclusion, an individualization of risk that destroys solidarity, underinvestment in prevention.

Three Leading Key Questions.

- **Shared Responsibility** (question 5)—who bears the risk, who reduces it, and who pays the price?
- **Timing and Cycles** (question 6)—do our models take account of risks that are intensifying from one decade to the next?
- **Inclusion and Listening** (question 4)—who is falling outside the reach of insurance, and do we know it?

Three Practices or Examples.

1. The cantonal building insurers (Switzerland). In a majority of cantons, insurance of buildings against fire and natural hazards is compulsory and entrusted to a public institution that combines three missions: prevention, intervention, and insurance. Together they devote about CHF 260 million a year to supporting fire services.[78] Whoever pays for the losses has an interest in preventing them.
2. Solidarity in the face of natural hazards. In Switzerland, in the cantons without a cantonal insurer, private insurers cover natural-hazard damage on uniform terms and at a uniform rate set under insurance supervision law, and share the losses among themselves within a pool; in France, the natural-disaster scheme (*régime des catastrophes naturelles*), created by the law of July 13, 1982, rests on a uniform surcharge and a public reinsurance guarantee.[79]
3. The Principles for Sustainable Insurance. Launched in 2012 by the United Nations Environment Programme Finance Initiative, they commit signatory insurers to integrating environmental, social, and governance issues into their decisions and to reporting on them publicly.[80]

One Indicator. The share of premiums reinvested in prevention (information, protective works, support for emergency responders), tracked together with the protection gap—that is, the share of losses that remain uninsured.

10.14 Industry

The Current Imbalance. A production engineer would measure it in tons. According to the United Nations Environment Programme's *Global Resources Outlook* 2024, the extraction of natural resources has tripled in fifty years and could rise by a further 60% by 2060 compared with 2020; high-income countries consume six times more resources per capita than low-income countries and generate ten times more climate impacts.[81] In Switzerland, industry has indeed cut its emissions by 33% since 1990, but it still accounted for 22.3% of national emissions in 2024.[82]

Conscious Balance. Industry turns matter into useful objects; it lies at the heart of the "put-put" of our illustration, that patient and often invisible process separating the *input* from the *output*. Conscious balance does not call for less industry on principle: it calls for an industry that knows where its materials come from, where its products go at the end of their life, and how the people who keep it running live. The task is to move from a linear economy (extract, make, discard) to a circular economy, and from circularity to regeneration. A production manager would put it this way: the question is no longer only "How much do we produce?" but "How many times can the same material be used, and in what state do we leave the place where we produce?" Industrial SMEs, numerous in Switzerland and in Europe, have an advantage here: they often know their suppliers, their customers, and their region, and can adjust faster than large corporations.

- **Floor**: decent and safe jobs, skills that are passed on, local production capacity for essential goods.
- **Ceiling**: extraction beyond what ecosystems can bear, pollution, planned obsolescence, overproduction.

Three Leading Key Questions.

- **Regenerative Innovation** (question 8)—can our waste become someone else's raw material?
- **Overall Impact** (question 3)—do we know the impact of our entire value chain, from the mine to recycling?
- **Power and Consent** (question 7)—do the people who make the products take part in the decisions that concern them?

Three Practices or Examples.

1. The Kalundborg industrial symbiosis (Denmark). For half a century, the town's main industrial companies have shared their surplus energy, water, and materials: more than twenty streams of excess resources now flow between them; one company's waste becomes another's resource.[83]
2. The EU Ecodesign for Sustainable Products Regulation (2024/1781). In force since July 18, 2024, it makes it possible to set requirements for durability, reparability, and recyclability, introduces a digital product passport, and bans the destruction of unsold textiles and footwear.[84]
3. Mondragon (Spanish Basque Country). Born in 1956 on the initiative of the priest José María Arizmendiarrieta, this federation of 81 autonomous cooperatives employs about 70,000 people; in the name of "wage solidarity," each cooperative caps its pay differentials. The bankruptcy of Fagor Electrodomésticos in 2013 is a reminder that no model is sheltered from the market.[85]

One Indicator. The circular material use rate (the share of secondary raw materials in total material inputs), tracked together with resource productivity, that is, the value created per ton of material consumed.

10.15 Crafts

The Current Imbalance. A cabinetmaker or a watchmaker sees it: it is often cheaper to buy new than to repair. The *Global E-waste Monitor 2024* estimates that in 2022 natural resources worth US$62 billion were thrown away with electronic waste without being recovered.[86] Behind this figure lies the gradual disappearance of skills, workshops, and trades: those who know how to repair, adjust, and maintain.

Conscious Balance. The sociologist Richard Sennett devoted to craftsmanship a book that has become a classic, *The Craftsman* (2008). In it he describes the desire to do a job well for its own sake (see the epigraph to this chapter), the dialogue between hand and head, and the slow acquisition of skill through repetition, error, and correction. Craftsmanship thus embodies several principles of Equiconscism: movement rather than state (the gesture is constantly refined), right measure rather than the maximum (doing well rather than doing more), and passing on (from master to apprentice). It is also an antidote to the *Artificiality* that SALTER describes: embodied presence par excellence. A watchmaker would say that you cannot rush a spring that is being wound, nor speed up an apprenticeship indefinitely: skill has its own rhythm, which productivity alone cannot measure.

- **Floor**: a decent income for craftspeople, the passing on of skills, a real possibility of repair (parts, tools, information).
- **Ceiling**: standardization that makes the craftsperson's gesture useless, low prices that make repair unprofitable, but also the exhaustion of self-employed people who work without counting the hours.

Three Leading Key Questions.

- **Legacy and Example** (question 9)—who will learn this skill after us?
- **Timing and Cycles** (question 6)—are we taking the time that a job well done requires?
- **Joy and Vitality** (question 10)—does this work bring the pride and joy of a piece of work successfully completed?

Three Practices or Examples.

1. The EU Right to Repair Directive (2024/1799). Adopted on June 13, 2024, and applicable from July 31, 2026, it obliges manufacturers of certain goods to repair them at a reasonable price, extends the legal guarantee by twelve months when the consumer chooses repair over replacement, and creates a European online repair platform.[87]
2. Repair Cafés, presented in chapter 9 (section 9.4). Born in Amsterdam in 2009, they now number more than 2,500 worldwide, many of them in Switzerland.[88] People pass on know-how there while saving a toaster.
3. Craftsmanship of mechanical watchmaking and art mechanics (Switzerland and France). Inscribed in 2020 on UNESCO's Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Hu-

manity, these skills are carried by the workshops of the Jura Arc, from Geneva to Biel/Bienne, where gestures of extreme precision are handed down.[89]

One Indicator. The repair rate (the share of broken items that are repaired rather than replaced), tracked together with the number of apprentices trained by the company or the trade.

10.16 Commerce and Consumption

The Current Imbalance. An attentive retailer can sense it in the aisles: we buy more than the planet can renew. According to the Global Footprint Network, humanity reached its Earth Overshoot Day on July 30 in 2026; if everyone lived as people do in Switzerland, that day would have fallen as early as May 11, for it would take about 2.8 planets to sustain the Swiss way of consuming.[90] Fast fashion, instant delivery, and constant advertising sustain a pace of buying that far exceeds needs.

Conscious Balance. Trade is one of the oldest occupations built on human connection: it brings together those who produce and those who need what is produced. Conscious balance condemns neither trade nor consumption; it questions their measure. David Fiorucci puts it this way: "The conscious citizen understands that every choice—consuming, voting, investing—has a systemic impact."[91] But it would be unfair to place the whole burden of responsibility on consumers: supply, prices, advertising, and the rules of the game shape choices. That is why retailers and legislators have a decisive role here.

- **Floor**: access for all households, including those on modest incomes, to essential goods at an affordable price; fair information; protection against abusive practices.
- **Ceiling**: overconsumption, obsolescence, misleading environmental claims, consumer debt, advertising pressure on children.

Three Leading Key Questions.

- **Inner / Outer Balance** (question 2)—does this purchase meet a need, or does it fill a void?
- **Overall Impact** (question 3)—what do we know about how this product was made and transported, and what happens to it at the end of its life?
- **Meaning and Purpose** (question 1)—does our business sell objects, or does it provide a lasting service to its customers?

Three Practices or Examples.

1. The EU directive on empowering consumers for the green transition (2024/825). Adopted on February 28, 2024, and applicable in the member states since September 27, 2026, it notably bans generic environmental claims that are not substantiated, sustainability labels that are not based on a certification scheme, and claims of neutrality based solely on carbon offsetting.[92]
2. Migros (Switzerland). Founded in 1925 by Gottlieb Duttweiler and turned into a federation of cooperatives in 1941, it had more than 2.3 million cooperative members at the end of 2025.[93] The example shows that a large retailer can belong to its customers rather than to shareholders.

3. Fair trade. Born in the Netherlands in 1988 with the Max Havelaar label, and present in Switzerland since 1992, it guarantees producers a minimum price, a collectively managed development premium, and social and environmental standards.[94]

One Indicator. The share of revenue generated by products certified as sustainable or fair trade, and by services that extend the life of goods (repair, rental, take-back, secondhand).

10.17 Construction, Housing, and Urban Planning

The Current Imbalance. An urban planner would say it straightaway: we build for a century using short-term criteria. According to the global status report of the Global Alliance for Buildings and Construction (UNEP), buildings accounted in 2022 for 34% of global energy demand and 37% of energy- and process-related CO_2 emissions.[95] At the same time, UN-Habitat estimates that one person in four worldwide lives in housing conditions that harm their health, safety, or prosperity, and that about 100 million people are homeless.[96] Switzerland shows, however, that the pendulum can swing back: emissions from its building stock have fallen by 47% since 1990, thanks in particular to heat pumps.[97]

Conscious Balance. Housing is a fundamental need; it is also becoming an investment, sometimes an object of speculation. Conscious balance holds these two realities together without letting the second devour the first. In urban planning, it seeks the right density: enough to preserve soils and make services accessible on foot, but not so much that the city ceases to be breathable, beautiful, and a place people can make their own. An architect would add that the most sustainable building is often the one that already exists: transforming, adding stories, and repurposing before demolishing saves embodied energy and preserves the memory of a place. Beauty is not a luxury; it is an indicator of balance (see chapter 11).

- **Floor**: decent, safe, healthy, and affordable housing for every household; accessible public spaces; mixed neighborhoods.
- **Ceiling**: sprawl, the embodied energy of demolition and rebuilding, ever-increasing living space per person, rents that drive residents out.

Three Leading Key Questions.

- **Timing and Cycles** (question 6)—can this building be transformed, reused, or dismantled rather than demolished?
- **Inclusion and Listening** (question 4)—have the future residents, the neighbors, and older people or people with disabilities been involved in the project?
- **Joy and Vitality** (question 10)—will this place make people want to live there, meet there, and stay there?

Three Practices or Examples.

1. Nonprofit housing in Zurich. More than a quarter of the city's housing units belong to cooperatives or other nonprofit housing developers; in 2011, voters wrote into the municipal charter a policy statement on housing that sets the goal of raising the share of nonprofit units among rental housing to one-third by 2050.[98] Rents there cover costs, without speculative returns.

2. The Hunziker Areal neighborhood (Zurich). Built by the *mehr als wohnen* cooperative and inhabited since 2014–2015, this neighborhood of about 1,200 residents pursues the goals of the 2000-Watt Society (see section 10.4); it combines housing, workshops, and shared spaces, along with a commons committee responsible for the shared areas.[99]
3. Decarbonizing the Swiss building stock. The Buildings Program run jointly by the Confederation and the cantons has, since 2010, supported energy-efficient renovation and the replacement of fossil-fuel heating systems; combined with cantonal regulations, it accounts for a large part of the drop in the sector's emissions.[100]

One Indicator. Life-cycle emissions per square meter (construction, operation, end of life), tracked together with the share of income that households spend on housing.

10.18 Tourism

The Current Imbalance. A destination manager knows tourism's two faces: encounter and saturation. A study published in *Nature Communications* in 2024 estimates that tourism accounted for about 8.8% of global greenhouse gas emissions in 2019, and that between 2009 and 2019 these emissions grew twice as fast as the world economy.[101] According to UN Tourism, international arrivals returned in 2024 to about 1.4 billion, nearly the pre-pandemic level.[102] Venice, Barcelona, Lucerne, and some Alpine villages have days when visitors outnumber residents.

Conscious Balance. Tourism can keep a valley alive, fund the protection of a heritage site, and open people's eyes to other cultures. It can also turn a place into a stage set, drive out its residents, and consume what it came to admire. Conscious balance seeks the right rhythm: fewer flying visits, more stays; fewer peaks, more spreading across the year; less consumption of a place, more relationship with it. A manager of an Alpine destination knows that tourism often provides most of the jobs in her valley; she can neither sacrifice it nor let it grow without limit. Her job is to listen at once to hoteliers, guides, farmers, residents who can no longer find housing, and the visitors themselves—and then to adjust flows, prices, and seasons.

- **Floor**: decent incomes and jobs for local populations, access to vacations and rest for people of modest means, the preservation of heritage.
- **Ceiling**: the carrying capacity of places (water, housing, transportation, peace and quiet), emissions from long-distance travel, the conversion of homes into tourist accommodation.

Three Leading Key Questions.

- **Inner / Outer Balance** (question 2)—how can we reconcile the desire to discover with residents' right to live in their own homes?
- **Inclusion and Listening** (question 4)—do residents have a say in the tourism development of the place where they live?
- **Timing and Cycles** (question 6)—does the place have time to rest between seasons?

Three Practices or Examples.

1. *Swisstainable* (Switzerland). Launched in 2021 by Switzerland Tourism, this sustainability program supports businesses and destinations across three progressive levels of commitment and

encourages longer, slower stays closer to home.[103] Its merit is to offer a path rather than a label of perfection.

2. The Sustainable Development Fee (Bhutan). Every foreign visitor pays a daily fee, set at US$100 per night since 2023, which funds education, health care, and environmental protection in the country, among other things.[104] Bhutan thus deliberately embraces low-volume, high-value tourism.
3. Venice's access fee (Italy). Trialed since 2024 for day-trippers on certain high-traffic days, it has been renewed in the following years; its real effectiveness remains debated.[105] The example shows both the need to regulate and the difficulty of doing so with a single instrument.

One Indicator. The ratio of visitors to residents on peak days, tracked together with the share of tourist spending that stays in the local economy.

10.19 Culture, the Arts, and Sport

The Current Imbalance. A theater director and a neighborhood club coach share one concern: access. According to the WHO, 31% of adults worldwide, about 1.8 billion people, were not getting enough physical activity in 2022, and that share could reach 35% by 2030.[106] Spectator sport and mass culture move considerable sums of money while local, grassroots activities lack funding and volunteers.

Conscious Balance. Culture, the arts, and sport are the places where what the tenth question calls joy, the élan of life, and beauty are cultivated. They are not extras: they hold a society together. *Magnifica Humanitas* expresses it this way: "Authentic culture and art preserve this spark, resisting the normalization of evil."[107] Sport, for its part, teaches rules, effort, defeat, and respect for one's opponent; it loses its meaning when performance at any cost, doping, or money takes over. A coach at an amateur club would sum it up simply: a child who gives up sport at twelve because they are not "good enough" is a failure of the system, not of the child.

- **Floor**: access for every person, from childhood on, to artistic and athletic practice and to cultural life; decent living conditions for artists and coaches.
- **Ceiling**: commodification that reduces the work of art and the match to a product, performance that damages bodies, the excess of mega-events.

Three Leading Key Questions.

- **Joy and Vitality** (question 10)—does this activity nourish joy, or only the rankings?
- **Inclusion and Listening** (question 4)—who never walks through the doors of our venues and stadiums, and why?
- **Legacy and Example** (question 9)—what do we pass on to children through the way we play, win, and lose?

Three Practices or Examples.

1. The Migros Culture Percentage (Switzerland), presented in chapter 9 (section 9.5.3). Written into the company's articles of association since 1957 and calculated on sales (originally 1% of the Federation's wholesale sales and 0.5% of the cooperatives' retail sales), it is paid even when sales fall, and it funds culture, society, education, leisure, and the economy.[108]

2. Youth+Sport (Switzerland). Created in 1972, this federal program supports sports camps and courses for children and young people and trains volunteer instructors, in dozens of disciplines.[109] It rests on a fruitful balance between public support and voluntary associations.
3. The Fribourg Declaration on Cultural Rights (2007). Drafted by a group of experts convened around the University of Fribourg, it brings together the cultural rights already recognized in various international instruments and affirms everyone's right to take part in cultural life.[110] It is a reminder that culture is not reserved for those who know its codes.

One Indicator. The rate of participation in regular cultural and sports activities among children and adults in low-income households, compared with the average. The gap between the two shows how much work remains.

10.20 Religions, Beliefs, and Spiritual Communities

The Current Imbalance. A hospital chaplain observes that the need for meaning is not waning, even as religious affiliations change. According to the Pew Research Center, in 2020, 28.8% of the world's population was Christian, 25.6% Muslim, 14.9% Hindu, and 4.1% Buddhist, while 24.2% reported no religious affiliation; between 2010 and 2020, the shares of religiously unaffiliated people and of Muslims grew.[111] The religious landscape is being reshaped: secularization in one part of the world, fervor in another, the political instrumentalization of religion here and there, discrimination and persecution elsewhere. The tribalism described by SALTER finds in religious identities a terrain that is both fertile and dangerous.

Conscious Balance. Equiconscism is not a religion and replaces none (see chapter 7). It offers a shared grammar that believers, agnostics, and atheists can hold in common, and chapter 12 shows how far the world's wisdom traditions and religions converge on measure, responsibility, and compassion. In Switzerland, the Constitution guarantees freedom of conscience and belief and leaves it to the cantons to regulate relations between church and state;[112] in France, *laïcité* ensures the neutrality of the state and freedom of worship. Within these frameworks, religious communities play a considerable social role: chaplaincies, help for people in need, welcoming migrants, accompanying the dying, building bonds between generations.

- **Floor**: the freedom to believe, not to believe, and to change one's convictions; the protection of minorities; access to spiritual care for those who want it, especially in hospitals, prisons, and the armed forces.
- **Ceiling**: coercive proselytism, control over people, political instrumentalization, identity-based withdrawal, abuse of power.

Three Leading Key Questions.

- **Meaning and Purpose** (question 1)—does our community serve the dignity of every person and the common good, beyond its own members?
- **Inclusion and Listening** (question 4)—whom, among other traditions or among nonbelievers, have we never listened to?
- **Legacy and Example** (question 9)—do our practices bear witness to what we teach?

Three Practices or Examples.

1. The Declaration Toward a Global Ethic (1993). Adopted in Chicago by the Parliament of the World's Religions, on the basis of a draft by the theologian Hans Küng, it places at the heart of a shared ethic the Golden Rule, found in one form or another in most traditions.[113]
2. The Document on Human Fraternity (Abu Dhabi, February 4, 2019). Signed by Pope Francis and the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar, Ahmad Al-Tayyeb, it declares that "religions must never incite war, hateful attitudes, hostility and extremism" and describes dialogue among believers as "coming together in the vast space of spiritual, human and shared social values."[114]
3. Interreligious dialogue in Switzerland. The Swiss Council of Religions, founded in 2006, brings together leaders of the Christian, Jewish, and Muslim communities; each year, the Week of Religions organized by the IRAS COTIS association offers encounters across the country between communities and with the public.[115] Dialogue there does not erase differences: it makes them livable.

One Indicator. The share of public institutions (hospitals, nursing homes, prisons, the armed forces, higher education institutions) that offer spiritual care open to the various traditions and to people with no religion. For a community: the number of projects carried out with other traditions or with secular partners.

10.21 Summary Table

Field	Floor (Do Not Fall Below)	Ceiling (Do Not Exceed)	Leading Key Questions	Proposed Indicator
10.1 Communication and media	Verified, pluralistic, local information for everyone	Capture of attention, concentration, targeted advertising	1 Meaning and Purpose · 4 Inclusion and Listening · 7 Power and Consent	Share of revenue from the audience; corrections published
10.2 Digital technologies	Digital inclusion, data protection	Surveillance, dependency, material footprint	2 Inner / Outer Balance · 7 Power and Consent · 3 Overall Impact	Service life of equipment
10.3 Transportation and mobility	Access to essential services, safety of the most vulnerable	Emissions, deaths and injuries, sprawl	3 Overall Impact · 4 Inclusion and Listening · 6 Timing and Cycles	Modal share of walking, cycling, public transportation; killed and seriously injured
10.4 Energy	Universal access to clean and affordable energy	Carbon budget, damage to landscapes	3 Overall Impact · 8 Regenerative Innovation · 7 Power and Consent	Continuous watts per person; renewable share
10.5 Education and training	Basic skills, belonging, recognized qualifications	Assessment pressure, overload, utilitarianism	9 Legacy and Example · 4 Inclusion and Listening · 10 Joy and Vitality	25-year-olds with an upper-secondary qualification; sense of belonging
10.6 Justice	Access to the courts, fair trial, protection of victims	Overcriminalization, summary or opaque justice	4 Inclusion and Listening · 5 Shared Responsibility · 8 Regenerative Innovation	Three-year reoffending; victim satisfaction

Field	Floor (Do Not Fall Below)	Ceiling (Do Not Exceed)	Leading Key Questions	Proposed Indicator
10.7 Health and mental health	Essential care, including mental health care, without ruin	Overmedicalization, team burnout	2 Inner / Outer Balance · 3 Overall Impact · 5 Shared Responsibility	Resources / demands at work; healthy life expectancy
10.8 Environment and climate	Protection and adaptation for the most exposed	Planetary boundaries, carbon budget	3 Overall Impact · 5 Shared Responsibility · 6 Timing and Cycles	Value-chain emissions vs. 1.5°C trajectory; areas restored
10.9 Wildlife and the animal world	No avoidable suffering, species-specific needs, habitats	Overexploitation, reductive animal farming, fragmentation	4 Inclusion and Listening · 3 Overall Impact · 8 Regenerative Innovation	High-welfare purchases; biodiversity-friendly areas
10.10 Common resources	Safe water, healthy air, fertile soil, livable landscape	Withdrawals > renewal, soil sealing	7 Power and Consent · 6 Timing and Cycles · 9 Legacy and Example	Sealed soil per inhabitant; withdrawals / renewable resource
10.11 Agriculture and food	Right to food, decent farm income, living soils	Inputs, waste, emissions	8 Regenerative Innovation · 6 Timing and Cycles · 2 Inner / Outer Balance	Share of food lost or wasted; soil organic matter
10.12 Finance and banking	Basic financial services, credit for SMEs, stability	Leverage, speculation, financing destruction	1 Meaning and Purpose · 3 Overall Impact · 5 Shared Responsibility	Share of financing aligned with 1.5°C and devoted to the real economy
10.13 Insurance	Insurability of housing, health, work tools	Exclusionary premiums, de-pooling, underinvestment in prevention	5 Shared Responsibility · 6 Timing and Cycles · 4 Inclusion and Listening	Share of premiums invested in prevention; protection gap
10.14 Industry	Decent jobs, skills, essential production	Excessive extraction, pollution, obsolescence	8 Regenerative Innovation · 3 Overall Impact · 7 Power and Consent	Circular material use rate; resource productivity
10.15 Crafts	Decent income, passing on skills, possibility of repair	Standardization, unprofitable repair, exhaustion	9 Legacy and Example · 6 Timing and Cycles · 10 Joy and Vitality	Repair rate; apprentices trained
10.16 Commerce and consumption	Affordable essential goods, fair information	Overconsumption, greenwashing, debt	2 Inner / Outer Balance · 3 Overall Impact · 1 Meaning and Purpose	Revenue from sustainable, fair-trade, and service offerings
10.17 Construction, housing, urban planning	Decent, affordable housing; public spaces	Sprawl, embodied energy, speculation	6 Timing and Cycles · 4 Inclusion and Listening · 10 Joy and Vitality	Life-cycle emissions per m^2; share of income spent on housing
10.18 Tourism	Local incomes, access to rest, preserved heritage	Carrying capacity, emissions, diverted housing	2 Inner / Outer Balance · 4 Inclusion and Listening · 6 Timing and Cycles	Visitors / residents on peak days; spending that stays local
10.19 Culture, the arts, and sport	Access from childhood, decent conditions for artists	Commodification, performance at any cost	10 Joy and Vitality · 4 Inclusion and Listening · 9 Legacy and Example	Participation of low-income households vs. average

Field	Floor (Do Not Fall Below)	Ceiling (Do Not Exceed)	Leading Key Questions	Proposed Indicator
10.20 Religions and beliefs	Freedom to believe and not to believe, protection of minorities	Control, instrumentalization, withdrawal	1 Meaning and Purpose · 4 Inclusion and Listening · 9 Legacy and Example	Institutions offering pluralistic spiritual care

Taken as a whole, this table reveals three constants. First, none of the ten key questions belongs to a single sector: **Overall Impact** and **Inclusion and Listening** recur most often, which confirms that widening the gaze is the cross-cutting skill par excellence. Second, the floors almost all speak of **access** and **dignity**, and the ceilings almost all of **excess** and **concentration**: the corridor of right measure has the same shape everywhere, even if the nature of its limits changes. Third, the most robust examples usually combine a collective rule (a law, a set of bylaws, a standard) with a grassroots initiative (a cooperative, an association, a municipality): this is linking the levels in action. You can take up this table for your own profession by adding a row, then assess your organization with the Ten-Question Scorecard (1 = needs strengthening or absent; 5 = fully integrated; see chapter 8 and appendix B). Chapter 14 sets out the process for moving from this diagnosis to action.

In Brief

- Every sector has its own pendulum: the floors and ceilings of the corridor of right measure change in nature from one profession to another, in keeping with differentiated equity.
- Everywhere, the floor protects access and dignity (information, energy, health care, housing, water, food, justice, culture); the ceiling protects against excess and concentration (captured attention, emissions, extraction, speculation, overconsumption).
- The two key questions that recur most often are **Overall Impact** and **Inclusion and Listening**: in every profession, conscious balance begins with looking further and hearing those who are absent—including animals, ecosystems, and future generations.
- Real examples, in Switzerland, in Europe, and elsewhere, show that the corridor can be traveled: energy, housing, consumer, and credit cooperatives; restorative justice; the right to repair; the rights of nature; shifting freight from road to rail.
- None of these examples is a finished model; each remains subject to the cycle Perceive, Listen, Discern, Adjust, Answer and Pass On.
- The most robust examples link a collective rule and a grassroots initiative: this is linking the levels—micro, meso, and macro.
- One indicator per field is enough to begin with, provided it is treated as a lamp that sheds light and not as a target that blinds.

Notes

1. Richard Sennett, *The Craftsman* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008). French translation: *Ce que sait la main. La culture de l'artisanat*, trans. Pierre-Emmanuel Dauzat (Paris: Albin Michel, 2009; BnF record, ISBN 978-2-226-18719-2).
2. David Fiorucci, working notes "L'Équilibre conscient" (2025), section 23.4.

3. Nic Newman et al., *Reuters Institute Digital News Report 2025* (Oxford: Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism, June 2025), "Executive summary," accessed September 30, 2026, https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/digital-news-report/2025/dnr-executive-summary.
4. Reporters Without Borders, "RSF World Press Freedom Index 2025: economic fragility a leading threat to press freedom," May 2025, accessed September 30, 2026, https://rsf.org/en/rsf-world-press-freedom-index-2025-economic-fragility-leading-threat-press-freedom.
5. Leo XIV, Encyclical Letter *Magnifica Humanitas* (May 15, 2026), no. 132, accessed October 16, 2026, https://www.vatican.va/content/leo-xiv/en/encyclicals/documents/20260515-magnifica-humanitas.html.
6. *Republik*, "Über uns" ("Die Republik ist komplett werbefrei"; launch on January 14, 2018; crowdfunding in April 2017), https://www.republik.ch/about, and "Manifest," https://www.republik.ch/manifest (both accessed September 30, 2026).
7. Journalism Trust Initiative, "Certification," https://journalismtrustinitiative.org/certification/; CEN, *CWA 17493:2019 — Journalism Trust Initiative*, December 2019 (both accessed September 30, 2026).
8. Regulation (EU) 2024/1083 of the European Parliament and of the Council of April 11, 2024, establishing a common framework for media services in the internal market (European Media Freedom Act), OJ L, April 17, 2024; main obligations applicable since August 8, 2025.
9. Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture, *Media literacy in Finland — National media education policy*, 2019 (UNESCO entry, policy monitoring platform); Open Society Institute – Sofia, *Media Literacy Index 2026*, January 2026, https://osis.bg/?p=5747&lang=en (both accessed September 30, 2026).
10. International Energy Agency, *Energy and AI* (Paris: IEA, April 2025), chap. "Energy demand from AI," accessed September 30, 2026, https://www.iea.org/reports/energy-and-ai/energy-demand-from-ai.
11. ITU and UNITAR, *The Global E-waste Monitor 2024*, Geneva/Bonn, March 2024; ITU press release, March 20, 2024, accessed September 30, 2026, https://www.itu.int/hub/2024/04/the-world-generated-62-million-tonnes-of-electronic-waste-in-just-one-year-and-recycled-way-too-little-un-agencies-warn/.
12. Leo XIV, *Magnifica Humanitas*, no. 146.
13. Fairphone, "The Fairphone 5: iconic modular design with 8 years of software support," press release, August 30, 2023.
14. French Law no. 2016-1088 of August 8, 2016 (*loi relative au travail, à la modernisation du dialogue social et à la sécurisation des parcours professionnels*); now Art. L2242-17 of the French Labor Code (*Code du travail*).
15. Regulation (EU) 2022/2065 of October 19, 2022, on a Single Market for Digital Services (DSA), in particular Arts. 34–35; fully applicable since February 17, 2024. For Switzerland: Federal Act of September 25, 2020, on Data Protection (FADP), SR 235.1, in force since September 1, 2023.
16. Federal Office for the Environment (FOEN), "Inventaire des gaz à effet de serre pour l'année 2024: légère baisse," press release, 2026, accessed September 30, 2026, https://www.bafu.admin.ch/fr/newnsb/0x0fdVaborNCilTCosvky. International aviation and shipping are reported separately.
17. World Health Organization, *Global status report on road safety 2023* (Geneva: WHO, December 2023).
18. Federal popular vote of November 24, 2024, on the Federal Decree on the 2023 Expansion Phase for the National Roads: rejected by 52.7% of voters (47.3% in favor). Federal Chancellery, official results.
19. Federal Office of Transport (FOT), "Transfert du trafic marchandises transalpin," page updated May 27, 2025, accessed September 30, 2026, https://www.bav.admin.ch/fr/transfert-du-trafic-marchandises-transalpin.
20. German Federal Government, "Deutschlandticket: Fragen und Antworten," 2026, accessed September 30, 2026, https://www.bundesregierung.de/breg-de/aktuelles/deutschlandticket-2134074.
21. Concello de Pontevedra, "Road safety: Zero deaths," accessed September 30, 2026, https://ok.pontevedra.gal/en/road-safety-zero-deaths/.
22. International Energy Agency, *Global Energy Review 2026*, chap. "CO2 emissions," accessed September 30, 2026, https://www.iea.org/reports/global-energy-review-2026/co2-emissions.
23. IEA, IRENA, United Nations Statistics Division, World Bank, and WHO, *Tracking SDG 7: The Energy Progress Report 2025*, June 2025; joint press release, accessed September 30, 2026, https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/blog/2025/06/tracking-sdg7-press-release-june2025/.
24. Eurostat, "9.2% of EU population struggled to keep their home warm," February 2, 2026, accessed September 30, 2026, https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-eurostat-news/w/ddn-20260202-2.
25. Middelgrunden Vindmøllelaug, official website (cooperative founded in 1996, wind farm inaugurated in 2001, "knap 8.000 interessenter"), accessed September 30, 2026, https://www.middelgrunden.dk; Jens H. Larsen et al., "Experiences from Middelgrunden 40 MW Offshore Wind Farm," Copenhagen Offshore Wind conference, October 2005 (accessed September 30, 2026, https://www.middelgrunden.dk/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Artikel-Copenhagen-Offshore-7-Middelgrund.pdf: the farm is "owned 50% by Energi E2 and 50% by The Middelgrunden Wind Turbine Cooperative"; commissioned in March 2001). On the current split (turbines 1 to 10 owned by Ørsted, 11 to 20 by the cooperative), accessed September 30, 2026, https://www.middelgrunden.dk/middelgrunden-wind-farm/.
26. Stadt Zürich, "2000-Watt-Gesellschaft," accessed September 30, 2026, https://www.stadt-zuerich.ch/2000watt: "Mit einer grossen Mehrheit von 76.4% Ja-Stimmen haben die Zürcherinnen und Zürcher 2008 Ja gesagt […] zur 2000-Watt-Gesellschaft"; revision of the municipal charter (*Gemeindeordnung*) of November 30, 2008.

27. Federal Chancellery, official results of the popular votes of May 21, 2017 (Energy Act, 58.2% in favor), June 18, 2023 (Federal Act on Climate Protection Targets, Innovation and Strengthening Energy Security, 59.1%), and June 9, 2024 (Federal Act on a Secure Electricity Supply from Renewable Energy Sources, 68.7%).
28. OECD, *PISA 2022 Results (Volume I): The State of Learning and Equity in Education* (Paris: OECD Publishing, December 2023). OECD trend average (countries comparable over time): from 490 to 475 points in mathematics and from 488 to 477 points in reading between 2018 and 2022, according to Department for Education, *PISA 2022: National Report for England*, London, December 2023, pp. 9–10 and 26–29, accessed September 30, 2026, https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/pisa-2022-national-report-for-england.
29. David Fiorucci, working notes "L'Équilibre conscient" (2025), section 6.12.
30. State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation (SERI), "Formation professionnelle initiale", accessed September 30, 2026, https://www.sbfi.admin.ch/fr/formation-professionnelle-initiale: "Initial vocational education and training imparts solid basic knowledge to two-thirds of young people in Switzerland" (our translation).
31. Finnish National Agency for Education (Opetushallitus), *National Core Curriculum for Basic Education* 2014, implemented from August 2016 (multidisciplinary learning modules).
32. Intercantonal Conference of Public Education of French-Speaking Switzerland and Ticino (CIIP), *Plan d'études romand*; D-EDK, *Lehrplan 21*; éducation21 foundation, Bern; UNESCO, *Recommendation on Education for Peace, Human Rights and Sustainable Development*, adopted by the General Conference in November 2023.
33. World Justice Project, *Rule of Law Index 2025*, Washington, 2025, accessed September 30, 2026, https://worldjusticeproject.org/rule-of-law-index/downloads/WJPIndex2025.pdf.
34. Leo XIV, *Magnifica Humanitas*, no. 79.
35. Children, Young Persons, and Their Families Act 1989 (New Zealand), part 4 (now the Oranga Tamariki Act 1989).
36. French Law no. 2014-896 of August 15, 2014 (*loi relative à l'individualisation des peines et renforçant l'efficacité des sanctions pénales*); Art. 10-1 of the French Code of Criminal Procedure.
37. Swiss Juvenile Criminal Procedure Code of March 20, 2009 (JCrimPC), SR 312.1, Art. 17 (mediation), in force since January 1, 2011.
38. Heather Strang et al., "Restorative Justice Conferencing (RJC) Using Face-to-Face Meetings of Offenders and Victims: Effects on Offender Recidivism and Victim Satisfaction. A Systematic Review," *Campbell Systematic Reviews* 9, no. 1 (2013), doi:10.4073/csr.2013.12; Lawrence W. Sherman and Heather Strang, *Restorative Justice: The Evidence* (London: The Smith Institute, 2007).
39. World Health Organization, "Over a billion people living with mental health conditions – services require urgent scale-up," press release, September 2, 2025, accessed September 30, 2026, https://www.who.int/news/item/02-09-2025-over-a-billion-people-living-with-mental-health-conditions-services-require-urgent-scale-up.
40. World Health Organization, "Mental health," fact sheet, accessed October 16, 2026, https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/mental-health-strengthening-our-response; the French edition quotes the French version of September 11, 2026 ("Généralités" section), https://www.who.int/fr/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/mental-health-strengthening-our-response.
41. One Health High-Level Expert Panel (OHHLEP), definition adopted and supported by the FAO, the OIE (now WOAH), UNEP, and the WHO, December 1, 2021, accessed September 30, 2026, https://www.who.int/news/item/01-12-2021-tripartite-and-unep-support-ohhlep-s-definition-of-one-health.
42. David Fiorucci, working notes "L'Équilibre conscient" (2025), part I, § 4.
43. Swiss Strategy on Antibiotic Resistance (StAR), official platform of the Confederation, accessed September 30, 2026, https://www.star.admin.ch/fr.
44. Buurtzorg, "About us" ("Buurtzorg was founded in 2006 with a nurse-led model") and "Buurtzorg model" ("A team of 12 work in a neighbourhood"), https://www.buurtzorg.com/about-us/ (both accessed September 30, 2026); KPMG, *The Added Value of Buurtzorg Relative to Other Providers of Home Care*, 2015.
45. World Health Organization, *WHO guidelines on mental health at work*, Geneva, September 28, 2022; WHO and ILO, *Mental health at work: policy brief*, 2022.
46. World Meteorological Organization, "WMO confirms 2024 as warmest year on record at about 1.55°C above pre-industrial level," press release, January 10, 2025.
47. Stockholm Resilience Centre and Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research, *Planetary Health Check 2025*, September 2025, accessed September 30, 2026, https://www.stockholmresilience.org/research/planetary-boundaries.html.
48. European Court of Human Rights (Grand Chamber), *Verein KlimaSeniorinnen Schweiz and Others v. Switzerland*, application no. 53600/20, judgment of April 9, 2024.
49. International Court of Justice, *Obligations of States in respect of Climate Change*, advisory opinion of July 23, 2025, https://www.icj-cij.org/case/187.
50. Regulation (EU) 2024/1991 of June 24, 2024, on nature restoration; European Commission, "Nature Restoration Regulation," accessed September 30, 2026, https://environment.ec.europa.eu/topics/nature-and-biodiversity/nature-restoration-regulation_en.
51. WWF, *Living Planet Report 2024 — A System in Peril* (Gland: WWF, October 9, 2024).
52. IPBES, *Global Assessment Report on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services: Summary for Policymakers* (Bonn: IPBES, 2019).
53. Philip Low et al., *The Cambridge Declaration on Consciousness*, proclaimed on July 7, 2012, at the Francis Crick Memorial Conference, University of Cambridge.

54. *The New York Declaration on Animal Consciousness*, New York University, April 19, 2024, accessed September 30, 2026, https://sites.google.com/nyu.edu/nydeclaration/declaration.
55. Federal Constitution of the Swiss Confederation, Arts. 80 and 120, para. 2; Animal Welfare Act of December 16, 2005 (AniWA), SR 455, Art. 1; Animal Welfare Ordinance (AniWO), SR 455.1.
56. *Animal Welfare (Sentience) Act 2022* (United Kingdom), 2022 c. 22, https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2022/22/contents.
57. Convention on Biological Diversity, decision 15/4, *Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework*, December 19, 2022, targets 2 and 3.
58. WHO and UNICEF, Joint Monitoring Programme (JMP), *Progress on household drinking water, sanitation and hygiene 2000–2024*, 2025, accessed September 30, 2026, https://www.washdata.org.
59. World Health Organization, "Ambient (outdoor) air quality and health," fact sheet, accessed September 30, 2026, https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/ambient-(outdoor)-air-quality-and-health.
60. Leo XIV, *Magnifica Humanitas*, no. 65.
61. Elinor Ostrom, *Governing the Commons: The Evolution of Institutions for Collective Action* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), chap. 3 (French trans. *La Gouvernance des biens communs*, Brussels: De Boeck, 2010); Robert McC. Netting, *Balancing on an Alp: Ecological Change and Continuity in a Swiss Mountain Community* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981).
62. *Te Awa Tupua (Whanganui River Claims Settlement) Act 2017* (New Zealand), assented to on March 20, 2017, ss. 14(1) and 20, https://www.legislation.govt.nz/act/public/2017/0007/latest/whole.html.
63. Constitution of the Republic of Ecuador (2008), Arts. 71–74; original text (Art. 71): "La naturaleza o Pacha Mama, donde se reproduce y realiza la vida, tiene derecho a que se respete integralmente su existencia y el mantenimiento y regeneración de sus ciclos vitales, estructura, funciones y procesos evolutivos."
64. Federal popular vote of March 3, 2013, on the amendment of the Spatial Planning Act (SPA): 62.9% in favor. Federal Chancellery, official results.
65. United Nations Environment Programme, *Food Waste Index Report 2024* (Nairobi: UNEP, March 2024); press release "World squanders over 1 billion meals a day," March 27, 2024.
66. Monica Crippa et al., "Food systems are responsible for a third of global anthropogenic GHG emissions," *Nature Food* 2 (2021): pp. 198–209.
67. Federal popular vote of September 24, 2017, on the Federal Decree on Food Security (counterproposal): 78.7% in favor; Federal Constitution, Art. 104a. On the required proof of ecological performance: Agriculture Act (AgricA), SR 910.1, Art. 70a.
68. Les Jardins de Cocagne, Geneva, accessed September 30, 2026, https://www.cocagne.ch: more than 400 households; three to four half-days of work per member per year; "Historique" page, accessed September 30, 2026, https://cocagne.ch/la-cooperative/historique, year 1978.
69. Andhra Pradesh Community-managed Natural Farming (APCNF), Rythu Sadhikara Samstha, accessed September 30, 2026, https://apcnf.in.
70. Institute of International Finance, *Global Debt Monitor*, 2026, accessed September 30, 2026, https://www.iif.com/Products/Global-Debt-Monitor.
71. Rainforest Action Network, BankTrack, et al., *Banking on Climate Chaos 2026*, accessed September 30, 2026, https://www.bankingonclimatechaos.org.
72. Leo XIV, *Magnifica Humanitas*, no. 160.
73. Ravi Chaudhry, *Capitalism to Peopleism: Inspiring a Leadership Transformation* (New Delhi: Simon & Schuster India, 2024), p. 173.
74. WIR Bank, "Histoire" ("The creation of WIR Bank was a response to the global economic crisis"; "Sixteen cooperative members" [our translation]), accessed September 30, 2026, https://www.wir.ch/fr/banque-wir/a-propos-de-nous/histoire/; James Stodder, "Complementary Credit Networks and Macroeconomic Stability: Switzerland's Wirtschaftsring," *Journal of Economic Behavior & Organization* 72, no. 1 (2009): pp. 79–95, doi:10.1016/j.jebo.2009.06.002.
75. Alternative Bank Switzerland (ABS), "Portrait" ("Founded in 1990"; "all loans are published" [our translation]), https://www.bas.ch/fr/ecologique-sociale-transparente; Global Alliance for Banking on Values, https://www.gabv.org (both accessed September 30, 2026).
76. Regulation (EU) 2020/852 of June 18, 2020, on the establishment of a framework to facilitate sustainable investment; Federal Council, "Swiss Climate Scores," June 2022 (revised in 2023).
77. Munich Re, "Natural disaster figures 2025," press release, January 2026, accessed September 30, 2026, https://www.munichre.com.
78. Association of Cantonal Building Insurers (VKG/AECA), accessed September 30, 2026, https://www.vkg.ch/fr/.
79. Ordinance of November 9, 2005, on the Supervision of Private Insurance Companies (Insurance Supervision Ordinance, ISO), SR 961.011, Arts. 171 ff. (natural-hazard insurance); French Law no. 82-600 of July 13, 1982 (*loi relative à l'indemnisation des victimes de catastrophes naturelles*).
80. UNEP Finance Initiative, *Principles for Sustainable Insurance*, launched at the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20), June 2012, accessed September 30, 2026, https://www.unepfi.org/insurance/insurance/.
81. United Nations Environment Programme, International Resource Panel, *Global Resources Outlook 2024*, Nairobi, March 2024, accessed September 30, 2026, https://www.unep.org/resources/Global-Resource-Outlook-2024.

82. FOEN, “Inventaire des gaz à effet de serre pour l’année 2024” (see note 16).
83. Kalundborg Symbiosis, “About us” and “50 years of circular production” (https://www.symbiosis.dk/en/om-os/ and https://www.symbiosis.dk/en/50-years-of-circular-production/, both accessed September 30, 2026): “For 50 years, Kalundborg Symbiosis has been a circular model”; “Today, more than 20 different streams of excess resources flow between the companies.” For a detailed analysis of the exchanges: Noel Brings Jacobsen, “Industrial Symbiosis in Kalundborg, Denmark: A Quantitative Assessment of Economic and Environmental Aspects,” *Journal of Industrial Ecology* 10, nos. 1–2 (2006): pp. 239–255, doi: 10.1162/108819806775545411.
84. Regulation (EU) 2024/1781 of June 13, 2024, establishing a framework for the setting of ecodesign requirements for sustainable products; European Commission, “Ecodesign for Sustainable Products Regulation,” accessed September 30, 2026, https://environment.ec.europa.eu/strategy/circular-economy/ecodesign-sustainable-products-regulation_en.
85. Mondragon Corporation, “About us” (first cooperative, ULGOR, founded on April 14, 1956, at the instigation of José María Arizmendiarrieta; 81 cooperatives; about 70,000 people; principle of “wage solidarity”), accessed September 30, 2026, https://www.mondragon-corporation.com/en/about-us/.
86. ITU and UNITAR, *The Global E-waste Monitor 2024* (see note 11).
87. Directive (EU) 2024/1799 of the European Parliament and of the Council of June 13, 2024, on common rules promoting the repair of goods, in particular Arts. 5, 16, and 22, https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/dir/2024/1799/oj.
88. Repair Café International Foundation, “About,” accessed September 30, 2026, https://www.repaircafe.org/en/about/.
89. UNESCO, “Craftsmanship of mechanical watchmaking and art mechanics” (Switzerland, France), inscribed on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity on December 16, 2020, following a joint nomination by Switzerland and France; see Musée international d’horlogerie (La Chaux-de-Fonds), “Patrimoine UNESCO”, accessed September 30, 2026, https://www.mih.ch/fr/patrimoine-unesco/.
90. Global Footprint Network, “Country Overshoot Days 2026,” accessed September 30, 2026, https://overshoot.footprintnetwork.org/newsroom/country-overshoot-days/.
91. David Fiorucci, working notes “L’Équilibre conscient” (2025), section 15.9.
92. Directive (EU) 2024/825 of the European Parliament and of the Council of February 28, 2024, amending Directives 2005/29/EC and 2011/83/EU as regards empowering consumers for the green transition through better protection against unfair practices and through better information, Art. 4(1) (application from September 27, 2026) and Annex I, points 2a, 4a, and 4c, accessed September 30, 2026, https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/dir/2024/825/oj.
93. Engagement Migros, “Histoire” (registration of Migros AG in the commercial register on August 15, 1925; conversion into cooperatives in 1941), accessed September 30, 2026, https://engagement.migros.ch/fr/histoire; Migros, *Rapport de gestion 2025*, accessed September 30, 2026, https://report.migros.ch/2025/fr/: “At the end of 2025, Migros had more than 2.3 million cooperative members” (our translation).
94. Fairtrade Max Havelaar Switzerland, “Sur Fairtrade Suisse” (“Fairtrade Max Havelaar was founded in Switzerland in 1992” [our translation], by six major aid organizations, together with the OS3 cooperative and the Magasins du Monde world shops movement), https://www.fairtrade.net/ch-fr/sur-fairtrade-suisse.html; Fairtrade International, https://www.fairtrade.net (both accessed September 30, 2026).
95. United Nations Environment Programme and Global Alliance for Buildings and Construction, *Global Status Report for Buildings and Construction 2024/2025*, Nairobi, 2025, accessed September 30, 2026, https://globalabc.org/our-work/tracking-progress-global-status-report.
96. UN-Habitat, “Housing,” accessed September 30, 2026, https://unhabitat.org/topic/housing.
97. FOEN, “Inventaire des gaz à effet de serre pour l’année 2024” (see note 16).
98. City of Zurich, “Wohnpolitik”, accessed September 30, 2026, https://www.stadt-zuerich.ch/wohnpolitik: “Heute gehört mehr als ein Viertel aller Wohnungen in der Stadt gemeinnützigen Bauträgerschaften”; “soll bis ins Jahr 2050 der Anteil gemeinnütziger Wohnungen in der Stadt einen Drittel der Mietwohnungen betragen”; “Mit der Annahme des wohnpolitischen Grundsatzartikels in der Zürcher Gemeindeordnung sprachen sich die Zürcher*innen 2011 klar für eine starke Rolle der Stadt in der Wohnpolitik aus.”
99. Baugenossenschaft mehr als wohnen, “Hunziker Areal” (“Seit 2014/2015 bietet das Hunziker Areal Wohnraum für 1’200 Personen und etwa 150 Arbeitsplätze”), accessed September 30, 2026, https://www.mehralswohnen.ch/hunziker-areal/.
100. Confederation and cantons, *Das Gebäudeprogramm / Le Programme Bâtiments* (since 2010); FOEN (see note 16).
101. Ya-Yen Sun, Futu Faturay, Manfred Lenzen, Stefan Gössling, and James Higham, “Drivers of global tourism carbon emissions,” *Nature Communications* 15 (2024): art. 10384, doi:10.1038/s41467-024-54582-7 (“5.2 Gt CO2-e or 8.8% of total global GHG emissions in 2019”; growth of 3.5% per year between 2009 and 2019, “double that of the worldwide economy”).
102. UN Tourism, *World Tourism Barometer*, January 2025.
103. Switzerland Tourism, *Swisstainable* program, accessed September 30, 2026, https://www.stnet.ch.
104. Kingdom of Bhutan, Department of Tourism (successor to the Tourism Council of Bhutan), *Sustainable Development Fee*, rate revised in 2023; https://www.bhutan.travel.
105. City of Venice, *Contributo di accesso*, accessed September 30, 2026, https://cda.ve.it/en.
106. World Health Organization, “Nearly 1.8 billion adults at risk of disease from not doing enough physical activity,” press release, June 26, 2024.
107. Leo XIV, *Magnifica Humanitas*, no. 122.

108. Engagement Migros, “Pour-cent culturel” (“Since 1957”; “firmly anchored in the Migros articles of association”; contribution “calculated on the basis of sales achieved and paid even when business declines”) and “Histoire” (“1% of the wholesale revenue of the FMC and […] 0.5% of the retail revenue of the cooperatives”) [our translation], https://engagement.migros.ch/fr/pour-cent-culturel and https://engagement.migros.ch/fr/histoire (both accessed September 30, 2026).
109. Federal Office of Sport (FOSPO), Youth+Sport program (J+S).
110. Fribourg Group, *Les droits culturels. Déclaration de Fribourg*, May 7, 2007, Interdisciplinary Institute of Ethics and Human Rights (IIEDH), University of Fribourg.
111. Pew Research Center, “How the Global Religious Landscape Changed From 2010 to 2020,” June 9, 2025, accessed September 30, 2026, https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2025/06/09/how-the-global-religious-landscape-changed-from-2010-to-2020/.
112. Federal Constitution of the Swiss Confederation, Art. 15 (freedom of conscience and belief) and Art. 72 (church and state).
113. Parliament of the World’s Religions, *Declaration Toward a Global Ethic*, Chicago, September 4, 1993.
114. Pope Francis and Ahmad Al-Tayyeb, *Document on Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together*, Abu Dhabi, February 4, 2019, official English text, accessed October 16, 2026, https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/travels/2019/outside/documents/papa-francesco_20190204_documento-fratellanza-umana.html.
115. Swiss Council of Religions (founded in 2006); IRAS COTIS, Interreligious Working Group in Switzerland, “Week of Religions” (*Semaine des religions*).

PART V

Horizons

Beauty, the world's wisdom traditions, artificial intelligence.

CHAPTER 11

Beauty and Right Proportion

> *"Hidden harmony is better than visible harmony."*
>
> — Heraclitus, fragment DK 22 B54 (our translation)

Why speak of beauty in a book devoted to the economy, society, and the living world? Because, since antiquity, human beings have sensed a link between what is beautiful, what is right, and what endures. A well-proportioned bridge, a well-made tool, a landscape tended for centuries move us because they show a successful balance between forces, uses, and needs. Conversely, ugliness often comes from excess: the gigantism that crushes, the accumulation that clutters, the haste that botches the job.

This chapter takes beauty, proportion, the golden ratio, and symbolic geometry seriously, with the rigor demanded by subjects that attract so many legends: the link between the beautiful and the good (11.1), proportion from Pythagoras to Leonardo da Vinci (11.2), the golden ratio between fact and myth (11.3), the language of forms (11.4), beauty as an indicator of balance (11.5), and right proportion in the economy (11.6).

11.1 The Beautiful and the Good

A Greek Intuition

The Greeks described the human ideal with the expression *kalos kagathos*, "beautiful and good": a person whose conduct, character, and presence form a harmonious whole. Here the beautiful and the good are not two separate worlds but two faces of one and the same rightness.

Plato gave this intuition its sharpest form. At the end of the *Philebus*, a dialogue devoted to the good life, Socrates looks for what gives value to a successful mixture of pleasure and thought. His answer is that any mixture that respects neither measure nor proportion destroys itself. He concludes that "the power of the good has taken refuge in the nature of the beautiful," for "measure and proportion everywhere become beauty and virtue" (our translation).[1] The sentence is remarkable: it does not say that the beautiful is pleasant; it says that measure is the common condition of both the beautiful and the good. Across twenty-four centuries, this is the very intuition behind the corridor of right measure (see chapter 7): a life, a city, or an economy degrades when one component overruns all the others.

Aristotle extends this thought with *mesotes*, virtue as the mean between excess and deficiency (see chapter 6). He observes that we say of a successful work that nothing can be added to it and nothing taken away, because excess and deficiency destroy perfection while the mean preserves it.[2] Here the vocabulary of ethics and the vocabulary of art are one and the same.

A Beauty That Cannot Be Reduced to Calculation

The ancient tradition did not stop there. In the third century, Plotinus raised a decisive objection. If beauty were nothing but symmetry and proportion among parts, he argued, simple things—a color, the light of the sun, gold, lightning in the night—could not be beautiful, since they have no parts. For Plotinus, proportion is a frequent condition of beauty but not its source; beauty is the radiance of a living form.[3] This objection protects us from a trap: believing that one need only apply a formula to produce beauty. We will return to it when we discuss the golden ratio.

Kant: Beauty as the Symbol of the Morally Good

In the eighteenth century, Immanuel Kant carefully distinguished the beautiful from the good. The judgment of taste, he writes in the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* (1790), is neither a calculation of utility nor a moral judgment: the beautiful pleases "without a concept" and disinterestedly. Yet in section 59 Kant builds a bridge: the beautiful is "the symbol of the morally good" (our translation).[4] He does not mean that beautiful things make us virtuous. He means that the experience of beauty—a free pleasure, one that can be shared and does not seek to possess—resembles moral experience in its form. Whoever learns to contemplate without appropriating learns something about freedom and respect. This idea matters for Equiconscism: beauty educates the gaze, and an educated gaze sees beyond its immediate interest.

"Beauty Will Save the World": A Sentence to Quote Exactly

The most frequently quoted sentence on the subject comes from Fyodor Dostoevsky. It is almost always presented as the author's own assertion. In *The Idiot* (1868–1869), however, it is a character, the young Ippolit, who reports it ironically to Prince Myshkin: "Is it true, prince, that you once said that 'beauty' will save the world?" (our translation).[5] The novel does not settle the question: it puts the sentence to the test of a world in which beauty is also coveted, bargained over, and destroyed. This ambiguity is precious. Beauty saves nothing on its own; it can also seduce, dominate, and serve propaganda. It becomes a saving force only when it is bound to goodness and truth.

It is in this sense that Simone Weil, in the twentieth century, links beauty to attention: for her, the beautiful is what we long to look at without wanting to consume it or change it.[6] Here we find two of the five gestures of widening the gaze (see chapter 7): opening one's eyes, and knowing when to be silent before what is greater than ourselves.

The encyclical *Magnifica Humanitas* expresses, in its own language, a convergence of the same kind. It regards as "companions on the journey" all who sincerely seek "truth, goodness and beauty,"[7] and it hopes "that humanity will never lose its beauty."[8] Its foundation is theological, whereas that of Equiconscism is not; but the criterion is shared: a more just world is also a more beautiful one.

11.2 Proportion: From Pythagoras to Leonardo da Vinci

Pythagoras and the Harmony of Numbers

The idea that the world is made of measurable ratios goes back to the school of Pythagoras (sixth–fifth centuries BCE). The Pythagoreans observed that consonant intervals correspond to simple ratios of string length: the octave to the ratio 2:1, the fifth to 3:2, the fourth to 4:3. On a stretched string, two sounds "agree" when their lengths stand in these ratios. The discovery is real, and it left a deep mark on Western thought: harmony became measurable.

A legend accompanies it, and it must be flagged as such. According to Nicomachus of Gerasa (second century), and later Boethius, Pythagoras discovered these ratios by hearing blacksmiths strike the anvil with hammers of different weights. The anecdote is physically false: the pitch of a hammer's sound does not depend on its weight according to these ratios.[9] The discovery was made on strings, not in a forge. This small example sums up the method of this chapter: keep the fact, set aside the myth.

The Pythagorean lesson is simple: harmony does not come from the equality of the elements but from the rightness of their relationships. An octave unites two different notes in a right relationship—an image of differentiated equity (see chapter 7).

Vitruvius: The *Symmetria* of the Body and the Building

Around 30–20 BCE, the Roman architect Vitruvius wrote the only architectural treatise from antiquity to have come down to us, *De architectura*, dedicated to the emperor Augustus. In it he defines *symmetria* not as our mirror symmetry but as the measured agreement of the parts with one another and with the whole, based on a common module.[10] At the beginning of book III, he grounds this idea in the human body: a temple must have the same correspondence among its members as a well-formed body. And he adds an image that would travel down the centuries: a man lying on his back, arms and legs outstretched, can be inscribed in a circle whose center is the navel; and, standing with arms extended, in a square.[11]

Vitruvius also demands three qualities of every building: strength (*firmitas*), utility (*utilitas*), and beauty (*venustas*). A building that is only strong is a bunker; only useful, a shed; only beautiful, a stage set. The successful work holds all three together, just as Equiconscism holds its three dimensions together.

Alberti: *Concinnitas*

In the Renaissance, Leon Battista Alberti took up Vitruvius in his *De re aedificatoria* (completed around 1452, printed in 1485). He defines beauty as a reasoned harmony of all the parts, such that nothing could be added, taken away, or altered without making the whole less good.[12] He gives this agreement a name: *concinnitas*, a term borrowed from Cicero's rhetoric, where it designates the elegant fitting together of the elements of a speech. For Alberti, *concinnitas* is not an ornament added afterward; it is the very law of nature, which the architect must imitate.

This definition says neither "as much as possible" nor "as little as possible," but "nothing too much, nothing too little, everything in its place": it is a definition of right measure.

Leonardo da Vinci and the *Vitruvian Man*

Around 1490, in Milan, Leonardo da Vinci drew in pen and ink the study now held by the Gallerie dell'Accademia in Venice and known as the *Vitruvian Man*. A naked man is shown in two superimposed positions, inscribed in both a circle and a square, accompanied by notes on the proportions of the body. Leonardo was not the only one to attempt the exercise: Francesco di Giorgio Martini and Giacomo Andrea da Ferrara proposed other versions at the same time.[13] But Leonardo's solution is original: he does not make the centers of the circle and the square coincide. The circle is centered on the navel, the square on the pubis. He thus corrects Vitruvius on the basis of the observation and measurement of real bodies.

The American biographer Walter Isaacson dwells on this drawing in his biography *Leonardo da Vinci* (2017).[14] He sees in it the meeting of two ways of knowing: art and science, meticulous observation and imagination. For Isaacson, Leonardo's genius rested on aptitudes that anyone can cultivate; the publisher sums up the book's thesis this way: Leonardo's genius "was based on skills we can improve in ourselves, such as passionate curiosity, careful observation, and an imagination so playful that it flirted with fantasy."[15] The drawing also expresses an ancient idea that Leonardo takes up in his notebooks: the analogy between the human body, a "little world" (microcosm), and the whole world (macrocosm).[16] The body and the Earth each have their framework, their flows, their balances.

Isaacson ends his book with a series of lessons drawn from Leonardo's life, whose spirit we can retain without forcing their letter: cultivate a relentless and disinterested curiosity, observe, respect facts, do not shut yourself up in watertight disciplines, remain open to mystery.[17] These lessons speak directly to Equiconscism: Perceive and Discern, two of the five movements of the cycle of conscious balance (see chapter 7), demand the same discipline of the gaze.

Leonardo remains a figure of inspiration, not a "first Equiconscist," which would be an anachronism; and several "Isaacson quotations" now circulating do not appear in his book.

Luca Pacioli and the "Divine Proportion"

In 1496, in Milan, Leonardo met the Franciscan mathematician Luca Pacioli. The two men became friends. In 1498 Pacioli wrote a treatise that he published in Venice in 1509: *De divina proportione*. Leonardo drew its plates: some sixty polyhedra, solid and skeletal, of striking clarity.[18] The "divine proportion" of which Pacioli speaks is what we now call the golden ratio. He calls it "divine" for theological reasons: it is unique, it binds three terms in a single ratio, and it cannot be expressed by any whole number or fraction, just as God escapes all definition.

Pacioli, moreover, does not recommend this proportion for building or painting: for architecture, he takes up the simple ratios of Vitruvius.[19] And the *Vitruvian Man* predates Leonardo's meeting with Pacioli. The idea that Leonardo built his works on the golden ratio therefore belongs to legend, not to history.

11.3 The Golden Ratio: What We Know, What We Are Told

> **FOCUS The Golden Ratio in a Few Lines**
>
> Cut a line segment into two unequal parts so that the whole segment is to the larger part as the larger part is to the smaller. The resulting ratio is the golden ratio, written φ (phi): $\varphi = (1 + \sqrt{5}) / 2 \approx 1.618034\ldots$ It has unique properties: $\varphi^2 = \varphi + 1$ and $1/\varphi = \varphi - 1 \approx 0.618$. It is an irrational number: it cannot be written as a fraction, and its decimal expansion never ends.

What Is Established

Euclid. The first known definition is found in Euclid's *Elements* (around 300 BCE). In book VI (definition 3), Euclid says that a straight line is cut "in extreme and mean ratio" when the whole line is to the greater segment as the greater segment is to the lesser.[20] He knows how to construct this division (book II, proposition 11) and uses it to construct the regular pentagon and two regular solids, the dodecahedron and the icosahedron (book XIII). For Euclid, it is a tool of geometric construction, with no aesthetic or mystical value whatsoever.

The pentagon. In a regular pentagon, the ratio of a diagonal to a side is exactly φ. The diagonals trace a five-pointed star, the pentagram, each of whose intersections divides the segments in this same ratio. This is a mathematical fact, and it is one of the reasons for the fascination this figure has exerted.

Fibonacci. In 1202, the Pisan mathematician Leonardo Fibonacci published the *Liber abaci*, which helped introduce Hindu-Arabic numerals into Europe. In it he poses a problem about the breeding of rabbits, whose solution is the sequence 1, 1, 2, 3, 5, 8, 13, 21, 34, 55, 89…, in which each number is the sum of the two preceding ones. The ratio between two successive terms (21/13, 34/21, 55/34…) comes ever closer to φ. Kepler noticed this at the beginning of the seventeenth century.[21]

Phyllotaxis. This is the most solid botanical reality linked to the golden ratio. In many plants, leaves, scales, or seeds emerge one after another around the stem, each turned by an angle close to 137.5°, called the "golden angle" (360° divided by φ^2). The result, on a sunflower head or a pinecone, is visible spirals whose numbers are often two consecutive terms of the Fibonacci sequence (for example, 34 and 55). In 1992, the physicists Stéphane Douady and Yves Couder showed that this arrangement emerges spontaneously from a growth process in which each new element settles where there is the most room available.[22] There is no hidden intention here, no "secret code of life": it is a solution to a problem of space optimization, produced by a growth dynamic. And it is not universal: a British citizen-science study of 657 sunflowers recorded 768 spiral patterns, of which 565 displayed Fibonacci numbers; the others showed only related structures, or no Fibonacci structure at all.[23]

Nature, then, does not follow a formula: it finds dynamic balances through successive adjustments, which sometimes produce remarkable proportions—an image of what Equiconscism calls a process rather than a state.

What Belongs to Myth

In the nineteenth century, the golden ratio changed status. The German term *goldener Schnitt* ("golden section") appeared in 1835 in the work of the mathematician Martin Ohm.[24] In 1854, Adolf Zeising claimed that φ was the key to the proportions of the human body and to all beauty. In 1931, the Romanian diplomat Matila Ghyka published *Le Nombre d'or* (the golden number) in Paris, which gave it a lasting esoteric aura.[25] Since then, the claims have multiplied. The mathematicians George Markowsky (1992) and Mario Livio (2002) examined them one by one.[26] Their conclusions can be summarized as follows:

Common Claim	What the Measurements Show
The façade of the Parthenon fits a golden rectangle.	The results depend on the measuring points chosen; the façade does not correspond to a golden rectangle; no Greek text mentions such an intention.
The Great Pyramid of Khufu encodes φ.	A ratio close to φ can be obtained, but it is explained by the slope chosen by the builders (the *seked*); nothing indicates that the Egyptians knew φ.
The nautilus shell is a golden spiral.	It is indeed a logarithmic spiral, but its growth rate does not correspond to φ (measurements give a ratio of about 1.3 instead of 1.618).[27]
The "ideal" face follows the golden ratio.	Perception studies have not confirmed a preference for φ; the proportions judged attractive are different and vary between individuals and cultures.[28]
The *Mona Lisa* and the *Vitruvian Man* are built on φ.	No source in Leonardo's hand indicates this; the proposed construction lines are arbitrary; the circle of the *Vitruvian Man* does not correspond to a golden construction.[29]
We all prefer the golden rectangle.	The experiments of Gustav Fechner (1876) have not been robustly confirmed by later studies.

Why do these legends persist? Because one can always find a ratio close to 1.6 if one is free to choose the points to measure on a complex object. This is confirmation bias, found in every reading of the world that hunts for "codes" (see also, in chapter 3, the cautions about cycles).

Le Corbusier and the Modulor

The architect Le Corbusier, born in La Chaux-de-Fonds (Switzerland) and naturalized as a French citizen in 1930, published *Le Modulor* (published in English as *The Modulor*) in 1950.[30] In it he proposes a scale of measurements based on the height of a man (1.83 m), the height of his raised hand (2.26 m), and two series of values linked by the golden ratio. He used it notably for the Unité d'habitation in Marseille (1947–1952). The reference man, an adult of tall stature, raises questions today from the standpoint of inclusion; but the principle remains a lesson in human scale: start from the body to size the built environment.

What We Can Keep

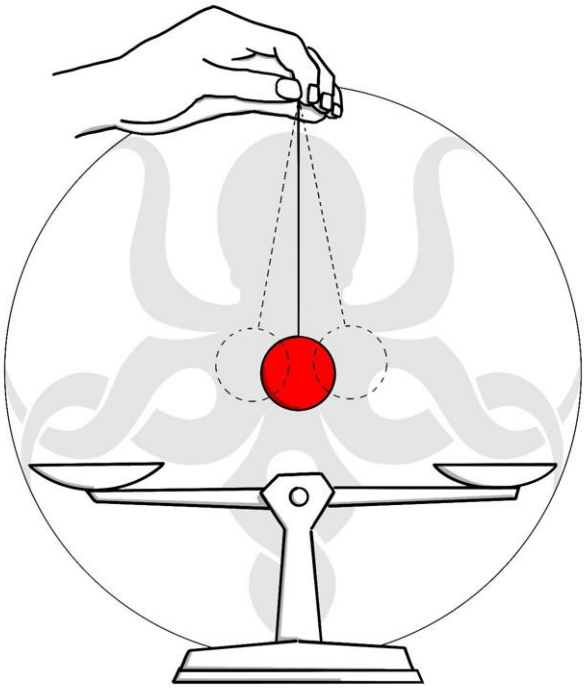
Should we abandon the golden ratio? No: we should put it back in its place. It is a fascinating mathematical object, present in the geometry of the pentagon and in certain growth processes, and one compositional tool among others, used deliberately by artists mainly since the nineteenth century. It is neither the universal key to beauty nor a code hidden in ancient monuments.

For Equiconscism, the golden ratio is above all a precise metaphor. It designates a relationship in which the part and the whole answer each other: the whole is to the larger part as the larger part is to the smaller. It is not equality (1:1), nor the domination of a single term; it is a proportion that connects. An organization, a city, or an economy is "in good proportion" when each part keeps a right relationship with the whole.

11.4 Symbolic Geometry: A Language of Forms

People often speak of "sacred geometry." The expression is ambiguous: it can refer to the historical study of the forms used in places of worship, but also to unfounded occult speculation. We prefer to speak of **symbolic geometry**, that is, the language of forms that human cultures have developed to express unity, stability, the living world, or passage. This language has no power in itself. It has meaning, because generations have given it meaning. It belongs to the common heritage of humanity, like languages and music.

The Circle: Unity and Relationship



Circle

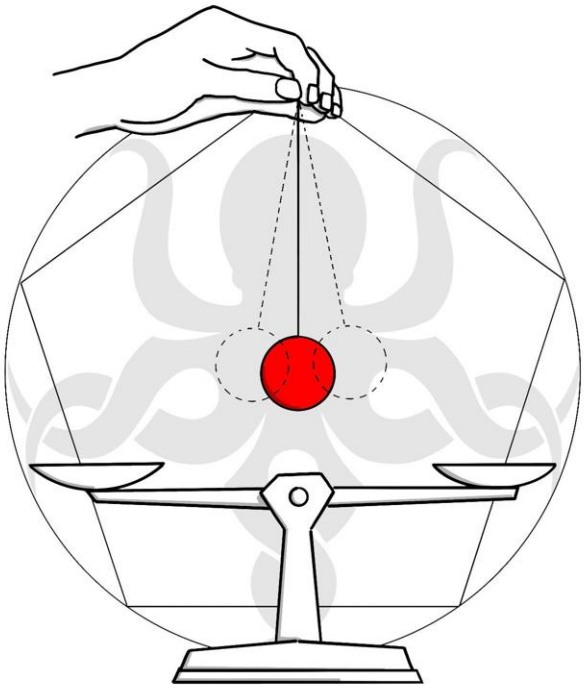
The circle has neither beginning nor end, and all its points are equidistant from the center. Almost every culture has made it the sign of unity, wholeness, and return. Ancient China associated heaven with the round and earth with the square. Zen Buddhism makes the circle drawn in a single gesture (*ensō*) an image of the present mind. In Switzerland, in the cantons of Glarus and Appenzell Innerrhoden, the *Landsgemeinde*—the open-air assembly of citizens—meets in a space called the "Ring," the circle:[31] there, democracy is literally done in the round.

In the emblem of Equiconscism, the circle surrounds the pendulum, the scales, and the octopus (see chapter 7). It says that everything inside it is connected: the economy, society, and the living world are not separate domains but parts of a single system.

The Square: Anchoring and Structure

The square, with its four equal sides and four right angles, evokes stability, the four directions of space, human construction. It is the shape of fields, squares, and cloisters. It stands for what holds firm. On its own it can become rigid; combined with the circle, it provides both anchoring and movement. The *Vitruvian Man* owes its force to this double inscription: the human being belongs at once to the built order (the square) and to the living order (the circle).

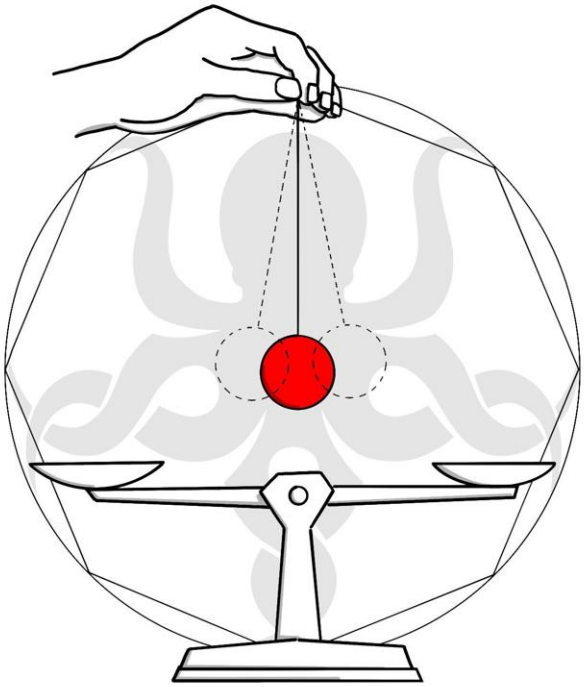
The Pentagon and the Pentagram: The Living World and Proportion



Circle and pentagon

The regular pentagon is the figure of the golden ratio (see 11.3). Fivefold symmetry is also common in the living world: many flowers have five petals (dog rose, apple and cherry blossoms), and an apple cut crosswise reveals a five-pointed star formed by its seed chambers; starfish and sea urchins display this symmetry as well. According to a late testimony, the Pythagoreans made the pentagram a sign of recognition associated with health.[32] The pentagon inscribed in the circle can thus be read as an image of the living world: five distinct points, connected by a right proportion, held within a single unity.

The Octagon: Passage and Transformation



Circle and octagon

The octagon holds a special place in the history of architecture. Geometrically, it is a figure of transition between the square and the circle: cut off the corners of a square and you obtain an octagon, and an octagon is already almost a circle. Builders used it to pass from a square base to a round dome. In the Christian tradition, many baptisteries are octagonal, such as those of the Lateran in Rome (fifth century) and of Florence (eleventh–twelfth centuries): the number eight evokes the "eighth day," the day of resurrection and new beginning.[33] The Palatine Chapel in Aachen (around 800) is octagonal, as is the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem (691–692). In China, the eight trigrams (*bagua*) are arranged in an octagon; in Buddhism, the eight-spoked wheel of the law represents the Noble Eightfold Path.

The octagon is also the figure of Octocracy®, the governance approach of LP3 AG / SA: there it signifies a balance between structure (the square) and movement (the circle).

Reading Forms Without Making Them Sacred

These forms have no efficacy of their own: an octagonal building is no more just than any other. They have an educational function: to make visible unity (the circle), anchoring (the square), living proportion (the pentagon), and transformation (the octagon), and thereby to give a community a shared vocabulary. This role, and this role alone, is what Equiconscism grants them.

11.5 Beauty as an Indicator of Balance

Biophilia

In 1984, the American biologist Edward O. Wilson published *Biophilia*.[34] In it he defends the hypothesis that human beings have an innate affinity for the living world, inherited from a long evolution in contact with nature. The hypothesis is debated, but several studies have supported it. That same year, Roger Ulrich published a study in the journal *Science* that has since become a classic: surgical patients whose rooms looked out on trees had, on average, shorter postoperative stays and needed fewer strong painkillers than patients whose window faced a brick wall.[35] Since then, "biophilic" architecture has sought to bring natural light, vegetation, living materials, and views of the outdoors into hospitals, schools, and offices.

Beauty, then, is not a luxury reserved for those who can afford it: it affects health and the sense of belonging. An ugly, noisy, treeless neighborhood is unjust to those who have no choice but to live there. The beauty of the places where people live is also a matter for an inclusive society built on solidarity.

Kintsugi: The Beauty of Repair

In Japan, *kintsugi* is the art of repairing broken ceramics with lacquer dusted with gold. Instead of hiding the break, it highlights it. The repaired object is considered more precious than before, because it carries its history. This aesthetic stands in direct opposition to the throwaway economy. It connects with the third dimension of Equiconscism, a respected and regenerated living world, and with its sixth principle: regeneration rather than mere preservation. It also connects with craftsmanship (see chapter 10): the patient gesture that repairs, maintains, and passes on.

Elegant Restraint

A mathematical proof is called "elegant" when it reaches its result with the fewest possible means. In design as in engineering, elegance is born of restraint: doing much with little. Alberti's definition is its expression. This restraint is not austerity; it is the visible form of right measure.

One might put it this way: beauty is the visible harmony of an invisible coherence. It echoes the fragment of Heraclitus placed as this chapter's epigraph. A balanced system tends to be beautiful because it is right; and that is why conscious balance is not merely useful: it is desirable.

The Tenth Key Question

Beauty appears explicitly among the ten key questions of Equiconscism. The tenth, **Joy and Vitality**, asks: "Does this action nourish joy, the élan of life, and beauty—signs of conscious balance rather than of mere performance?" (see chapter 8). This question is not decorative: a project can meet its numerical targets while producing soulless places, damaged landscapes, and exhausted people. A lasting absence of beauty, joy, and vitality signals an imbalance, even when the financial indicators are good.

The Earth Charter, adopted in 2000, makes beauty a good to be handed down: its fourth principle calls on us to "Secure Earth's bounty and beauty for present and future generations"[36] (see chapter 12).

IN PRACTICE **The Beauty Test**

Before approving a project (a building, a product, a reorganization, a campaign), put three simple questions to a small group made up of people involved and people affected:

1. What in this project is beautiful, and for whom?
2. What would be ugly or hurtful, seen from someone else's place?
3. What could we remove to make it fairer and simpler? Write down the answers and link them to the tenth key question of the Ten-Question Scorecard (see chapter 8).

11.6 Proportion and the Economy

"Nothing in Excess"

At the temple of Apollo at Delphi, according to tradition, two maxims were inscribed: "Know thyself" and "Nothing in excess" (*mēden agan*). Plato mentions them together in the *Protagoras*[37] (see chapter 6). The second is often forgotten. Yet it is the oldest economic maxim of the West: neither too much nor too little. Equiconscism translates it into its second principle: right measure rather than the maximum.

The Proportion of Incomes

The question of proportion arises very concretely in the gap between levels of pay. Plato already proposed, in the *Laws*, that the largest fortune in the ideal city should not exceed four times the basic allotment, beyond which the surplus was to revert to the community.[38] One need not adopt this figure to retain the idea: a society comes apart when its gaps become out of all proportion.

Recent data show how far these gaps have changed in scale. In the United States, according to the Economic Policy Institute, the pay of the CEOs of the 350 largest companies amounted in 2024 to about 281 times that of a typical worker, compared with about 21 times in 1965.[39] In Switzerland, two popular votes addressed this question. On March 3, 2013, the people and the cantons accepted the popular initiative "against abusive executive pay" (the Minder initiative) with nearly 68% of the vote and in every canton, giving shareholders the power to vote on executive compensation.[40] On November 24, 2013, the "1:12 – For Fair Pay" initiative, which sought to limit the highest salary in a company to twelve times the lowest, was rejected by 65.3% of voters and by every canton.[41]

These two results are instructive. They show that a large majority rejects excess but also rejects a uniform ceiling imposed on all companies. That is precisely the position of Equiconscism. It does not propose a single ratio, which would ignore the diversity of sectors, sizes, and contexts (differentiated equity). It proposes a **corridor**: each organization discerns, makes public, and justifies the gap between its highest and lowest pay, adjusts it over time, and answers for it to its stakeholders. Transparency is, in fact, moving in this direction: in the United States, disclosure of the ratio between the CEO's pay and that of the median employee has been mandatory for publicly traded companies since 2018; in the European Union, Directive (EU) 2023/970 on pay transparency, which aims at equal pay between women and men, was to be transposed by the member states by June 7, 2026, at the latest.[42] The pay gap is among the indicators proposed in chapter 14.

Other Proportions to Recover

Proportion is not only about salaries. It also concerns:

- **time**: the share of work, rest, family, civic engagement, and leisure in a life; an organization that absorbs all its members' time is out of proportion, even if it pays well (see chapter 9);
- **scale**: the size of a company, a facility, or a city relative to the needs it serves and the territory that sustains it; the Modulor recalled the scale of the body, E. F. Schumacher that of the human community (*Small Is Beautiful*, 1973; see chapter 4);
- **the local and the global**: what should be produced, decided, and exchanged close to home, and what gains from being done on a large scale—this is the question of subsidiarity;
- **taking and regenerating**: what we take from the living world and what we give back to it.

Each time, the question is not "how much, at most?" but "what relationship is right, here and now, between the parts and the whole?" Vitruvius and Alberti put it to architects; Equiconscism puts it to leaders, elected officials, families, and citizens.

> **KEY QUESTION** Key Question
>
> In your organization or your life, which proportion is furthest today from right measure: between incomes, among the different uses of your time, between what you take and what you give back? What would need to be added, removed, or shifted for the whole to become more just—and more beautiful?

In Brief

- Since Plato, the beautiful and the good have been linked by **measure** and **proportion**: "nothing too much, nothing too little, everything in its place" is a definition of right measure that is at once aesthetic and ethical.
- Kant makes the beautiful the "symbol of the morally good"; Plotinus reminds us that beauty cannot be reduced to a formula; the sentence "beauty will save the world" is reported by one of Dostoevsky's characters, not asserted by Dostoevsky himself.
- From Pythagoras to Vitruvius, Alberti, and Leonardo da Vinci, proportion is a way of thinking about right relationships between **different** elements—an image of differentiated equity.
- The **golden ratio** is a mathematical fact (Euclid, the pentagon, Fibonacci) and genuinely plays a role in **phyllotaxis**; its presence in the Parthenon, the pyramids, the nautilus, or the "ideal" face belongs to **myth** (Markowsky, Livio).
- **Symbolic geometry**—circle, square, pentagon, octagon—is a language of forms developed by human cultures, to be read without making it sacred.
- Beauty is an **indicator of balance**: biophilia, kintsugi, elegant restraint, and the tenth key question (Joy and Vitality) make it a signal of rightness, not a luxury.
- In the economy, Equiconscism does not set a single ratio: it proposes a **corridor of proportions** (incomes, time, scale, local and global) that is discerned, made public, and owned.

Notes

1. Plato, *Philebus*, 64d–e (Greek: *metriotês gar kai symmetria kallos dêpou kai aretê pantachou symbainei gignesthai*), our translation. Reference French translation: Platon, *Philèbe*, trans. A. Diès (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1941).
2. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, II, 5 (6), 1106b 9–14.
3. Plotinus, *Enneads*, I, 6 ("On Beauty"), 1.
4. Immanuel Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment* (1790), § 59 (Ak. V, 353: "das Schöne ist das Symbol des Sittlich-Guten"), our translation from the German. French edition cited in the original: *Critique de la faculté de juger*, trans. A. Renaut (Paris: Aubier, 1995; repr. GF-Flammarion, 2000).
5. Fyodor Dostoevsky, *The Idiot* (1868–1869), part III, chap. 5. French trans.: A. Markowicz, *L'Idiot* (Arles: Actes Sud, "Babel" series).
6. An idea developed notably in Simone Weil, *La Pesanteur et la Grâce* (Paris: Plon, 1947) (paraphrase).
7. Leo XIV, Encyclical Letter *Magnifica Humanitas* (May 15, 2026), no. 23, accessed October 16, 2026, https://www.vatican.va/content/leo-xiv/en/encyclicals/documents/20260515-magnifica-humanitas.html.
8. Ibid., no. 16.
9. Nicomachus of Gerasa, *Manual of Harmonics*, 6; Boethius, *De institutione musica*, I, 10. On the discovery of consonant ratios through the length of vibrating strings, see Mario Livio, *The Golden Ratio* (New York: Broadway Books, 2002), chap. 2 ("The Pitch and the Pentagram").
10. Vitruvius, *De architectura*, I, 2, 1–4 (the six notions: *ordinatio*, *dispositio*, *eurythmia*, *symmetria*, *decor*, *distributio*); I, 3, 2 (*firmitas*, *utilitas*, *venustas*).
11. Vitruvius, *De architectura*, III, 1, 1–3.
12. Leon Battista Alberti, *De re aedificatoria*, VI, 2 (definition of beauty) and IX, 5 (*concinnitas*). French trans.: *L'Art d'édifier*, trans. P. Caye and F. Choay (Paris: Seuil, 2004).
13. Gallerie dell'Accademia, Venice. On the versions by Francesco di Giorgio Martini and Giacomo Andrea da Ferrara, see Walter Isaacson, *Leonardo da Vinci* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2017).
14. Walter Isaacson, *Leonardo da Vinci* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2017); French trans.: *Léonard de Vinci. La biographie*, trans. A.-S. De Clercq and J. Gerlier (Lausanne: Quanto [Presses polytechniques et universitaires romandes], 2019).
15. Simon & Schuster, publisher's description of *Leonardo da Vinci*, accessed September 30, 2026, https://www.simonandschuster.com/books/Leonardo-da-Vinci/Walter-Isaacson/9781501139161.
16. Leonardo da Vinci, notebooks ("l'omo è detto da li antiqui…"); Italian text and English translation in Jean Paul Richter, ed., *The Literary Works of Leonardo da Vinci* (London, 1883), vol. 2. On the microcosm/macrocosm analogy in Leonardo, see Isaacson, *Leonardo da Vinci*, and Ludwig Heinrich Heydenreich, *Leonardo da Vinci* (Basel: Holbein, 1954).
17. Isaacson, *Leonardo da Vinci*, conclusion ("Learning from Leonardo") (paraphrase).
18. Luca Pacioli, *De divina proportione* (Venice: Paganino Paganini, 1509) (manuscripts of 1498: Geneva, Bibliothèque de Genève, and Milan, Biblioteca Ambrosiana).
19. Livio, *The Golden Ratio*.
20. Euclid, *Elements*, VI, def. 3; II, 11; IV, 10–11 (pentagon); XIII, 8–11 and 16–17. French trans.: B. Vitrac, *Les Éléments* (Paris: PUF, 1990–2001).
21. Leonardo Pisano (Fibonacci), *Liber abaci*, 1202 (2nd ed. 1228). On Kepler, see Livio, *The Golden Ratio*.
22. Stéphane Douady and Yves Couder, "Phyllotaxis as a Physical Self-Organized Growth Process," *Physical Review Letters* 68, no. 13 (1992): pp. 2098–2101.
23. Jonathan Swinton, Erinma Ochu, and The MSI Turing's Sunflower Consortium, "Novel Fibonacci and Non-Fibonacci Structure in the Sunflower: Results of a Citizen Science Experiment," *Royal Society Open Science* 3, no. 5 (2016): 160091.
24. Martin Ohm, *Die reine Elementar-Mathematik*, 2nd ed. (Berlin, 1835); see Livio, *The Golden Ratio*, chap. 1 ("Prelude to a Number").
25. Adolf Zeising, *Neue Lehre von den Proportionen des menschlichen Körpers* (Leipzig, 1854); Matila C. Ghyka, *Le Nombre d'or. Rites et rythmes pythagoriciens dans le développement de la civilisation occidentale* (Paris: Gallimard, 1931).
26. George Markowsky, "Misconceptions about the Golden Ratio," *The College Mathematics Journal* 23, no. 1 (1992): pp. 2–19; Mario Livio, *The Golden Ratio: The Story of Phi, the World's Most Astonishing Number* (New York: Broadway Books, 2002).
27. Clement Falbo, "The Golden Ratio—A Contrary Viewpoint," *The College Mathematics Journal* 36, no. 2 (2005): pp. 123–134.
28. Pamela M. Pallett, Stephen Link, and Kang Lee, "New 'Golden' Ratios for Facial Beauty," *Vision Research* 50, no. 2 (2010): pp. 149–154.
29. Markowsky, "Misconceptions about the Golden Ratio"; Livio, *The Golden Ratio*.
30. Le Corbusier, *Le Modulor. Essai sur une mesure harmonique à l'échelle humaine applicable universellement à l'architecture et à la mécanique* (Boulogne-sur-Seine: Éditions de l'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui, 1950); *Modulor* 2, 1955.
31. Canton of Glarus and canton of Appenzell Innerrhoden, official information on the Landsgemeinde (www.gl.ch; www.ai.ch).
32. Lucian of Samosata, *Pro lapsu inter salutandum*, 5 (late testimony, second century CE).
33. On the symbolism of the number eight in baptisteries, see Richard Krautheimer, "Introduction to an 'Iconography of Mediaeval Architecture,'" *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 5 (1942): pp. 1–33.

34. Edward O. Wilson, *Biophilia* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984).
35. Roger S. Ulrich, "View through a Window May Influence Recovery from Surgery," *Science* 224, no. 4647 (1984): pp. 420–421.
36. Earth Charter (2000), principle 4, original English text, Earth Charter International, accessed October 16, 2026, https://earthcharter.org/read-the-earth-charter/respect-and-care-for-the-community-of-life/.
37. Plato, *Protagoras*, 343b.
38. Plato, *Laws*, V, 744e–745a.
39. Elise Gould, Josh Bivens, and Jori Kandra, "CEO pay increased in 2024 and is now 281 times that of the typical worker," Economic Policy Institute, September 25, 2025, accessed September 30, 2026, https://www.epi.org/publication/ceo-pay/. Measure based on "realized" compensation (1965: 20.6 to 1).
40. Federal Chancellery, popular vote of March 3, 2013, popular initiative "against abusive executive pay," www.bk.admin.ch; detailed results: Année politique suisse (University of Bern), Swissvotes, item no. 568 (67.96% yes; turnout 46.7%; 23 of 23 cantons), accessed September 30, 2026, https://swissvotes.ch/vote/568.00.
41. Federal Chancellery, popular vote of November 24, 2013, popular initiative "1:12 – For Fair Pay": 34.7% yes, 65.3% no; turnout 53.6%; rejected by every canton, www.bk.admin.ch; Swissvotes, item no. 575, accessed September 30, 2026, https://swissvotes.ch/vote/575.00.
42. U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission, "Pay Ratio Disclosure," final rule of August 5, 2015 (Dodd-Frank Act, sec. 953(b)); Directive (EU) 2023/970 of the European Parliament and of the Council of May 10, 2023, art. 34.

CHAPTER 12

Balance and Consciousness in the World's Wisdom Traditions and Religions

> *"And the heaven, He raised it high. And He set up the balance, so that you do not transgress in the weighing."*
>
> — Qur'an, sura 55 (Ar-Rahmān), verses 7–8 (our translation from the French of M. Hamidullah)

> *"He who knows how to be content is safe from disgrace. He who knows when to stop never comes to ruin."*
>
> — Laozi, *Tao Te Ching*, chap. 44 (our translation from the French of S. Julien, 1842)

Humanity's great religious and philosophical traditions do not all say the same thing. They do not share the same idea of God, the same idea of salvation, or the same idea of the person. To conflate them would be to disrespect them. And yet, when we read them in light of one precise question—how can we live with measure and with awareness, without harming others or the world?—we discover striking convergences. Nearly all of them speak of balance, of the mean, of limits, of sharing, of responsibility toward those who will come after us. Nearly all of them know some form of the golden rule.

This chapter follows three rules. **Respect**: each tradition is presented in its own terms, with its own texts, and with the awareness that it is living and diverse. **Non-syncretism**: we do not manufacture a common religion out of selected fragments; what converges does not erase what distinguishes. **Universality**: this chapter is addressed as much to believers as to agnostics and atheists. Equiconscism is not a religion (see chapter 7). It asks no one to abandon their faith or their absence of faith. It offers a common grammar of conscious balance that each of us can reread from within our own source. Sacred texts are quoted as wisdom and narratives to be interpreted, with their references and their translations.[1]

12.1 Ancient Egypt: Maat, the Just Order

For the ancient Egyptians, Maat designates both a goddess, depicted wearing an ostrich feather on her head, and a principle: the just order of the world, which encompasses truth, justice, balance, and solidarity. Its opposite is *isfet*: disorder, violence, falsehood. Maat is not given once and for all. It must constantly be "done" and maintained—by the pharaoh, by judges, and by every person—or chaos returns.

The Egyptologist Jan Assmann has shown that Maat rests on a "connective justice": acting for others, remembering what one has received, answering for one another. The order of the world holds because human beings hold together.[2]

The most famous image of Maat is the weighing of the heart, described in chapter 125 of the *Book of the Dead* (New Kingdom). The heart of the deceased is placed on one pan of the scales, the feather of Maat on the other. The deceased pronounces a "declaration of innocence" in which he affirms, among other things, that he has caused no suffering, let no one go hungry, neither reduced the measure of grain nor tampered with the beam of the scales.[3] It is striking to find, at the heart of a religious text, commitments so concrete and so economic: just weights, just measures, no exploitation. Maat is an ethic of right measure applied to ordinary life.

12.2 Judaism: Limit, Justice, Repair

The Sabbath, the Sabbatical Year, and the Jubilee

The Torah writes limits into the very heart of time. The Sabbath, the seventh day, halts work for everyone: Deuteronomy specifies that the rest applies also to the male and female servant, the stranger, and even the livestock (Deuteronomy 5:14). In the seventh year, the sabbatical year (*shemitah*), the land is left to rest (Leviticus 25:1–7) and, according to Deuteronomy, debts are remitted (Deuteronomy 15:1–2). Every fifty years, the jubilee provides for the release of people enslaved for debt and the return of land to its families of origin (Leviticus 25:8–17 and 39–41). The reason is given in a verse of great reach: "The land shall not be sold in perpetuity; for the land is mine, for you are with me as strangers and sojourners" (Leviticus 25:23, our translation).[4]

Historians debate whether the jubilee was ever actually put into practice. But the idea is clear, and it is powerful: an economic system must include mechanisms for returning to balance, or else accumulation and indebtedness run away. Here, formulated more than two millennia ago, is the intuition of cyclical regulation (see chapter 3) and of a ceiling on concentration (see chapter 7). The Torah also sets a limit on destruction: even in time of war, it is forbidden to cut down fruit trees (Deuteronomy 20:19–20). Rabbinic tradition drew from this the principle of *bal tashḥit*, the prohibition of waste and needless destruction.

Tzedakah: Justice That Shares

The word *tzedakah*, often translated as "charity," comes from *tzedek*, justice. Giving is not an optional gesture of generosity: it is rendering to each what is due to them. In the twelfth century, Maimonides ranked the forms of *tzedakah* in eight degrees; the highest consists in helping a person become self-sufficient—through a loan, a partnership, or a job—so that they no longer need to receive.[5] We recognize here differentiated equity and the regeneration of human capacities.

Tikkun Olam: Repairing the World

The expression *tikkun olam*, "repair of the world," first appears in the Mishnah to justify certain rules adopted "for the proper order of the world." It later takes on a mystical dimension in the Kabbalah of Isaac Luria (Safed, sixteenth century), in which every just action helps gather the scattered sparks of a broken world. In contemporary Judaism, it broadly designates social and ecological engagement[6] (see chapter 3).

The Sayings of the Fathers

The tractate *Pirkei Avot* ("Sayings of the Fathers"), a collection of rabbinic wisdom included in the Mishnah, contains two sayings that sum up Equiconscist responsibility. Hillel the Elder (first century BCE): "If I am not for myself, who will be for me? And if I am only for myself, what am I? And if not now, when?" (Avot 1:14, our translation).[7] In three questions, Hillel articulates care for oneself, openness to others, and the urgency of acting—the inner and outer balance of the second key question. And Rabbi Tarfon: "It is not up to you to finish the work, but you are not free to desist from it" (Avot 2:16, our translation).[8] No one will restore the world's balance alone; no one is exempt from contributing to it.

12.3 Christianity: A Time for Everything, Love of Neighbor, Temperance

A Time for Everything

The book of Ecclesiastes (Qoheleth), shared by the Jewish and Christian Bibles, contains one of the best-known texts on the rhythm of life: "For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven" (Ecclesiastes 3:1).[9] There follows a long list of opposites: being born and dying, planting and uprooting, keeping silent and speaking. Wisdom does not consist in choosing one pole once and for all, but in discerning the right moment. This is exactly what is at stake in the sixth key question, **Timing and Cycles** (see chapter 8).

The Golden Rule and a Wider Idea of the Neighbor

Jesus takes up the commandment of Leviticus, "you shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Leviticus 19:18), and joins it to the love of God as the two commandments on which hang all the Law and the prophets (Matthew 22:37–40). He also formulates the golden rule in its positive form: "Whatever you want people to do for you, do the same for them, for this is the law and the prophets" (Matthew 7:12, our translation).[10] In the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25–37), the question "Who is my neighbor?" is turned around: my neighbor is not the one who belongs to my group but the one to whom I make myself a neighbor. It is a radical lesson in widening the gaze.

Temperance and Monastic Measure

The Christian tradition took over from the Greeks the four cardinal virtues—prudence, justice, fortitude, and temperance—already listed in the book of Wisdom (Wisdom 8:7) and systematized by Thomas Aquinas. Temperance is not deprivation: it is the self-mastery that allows us to enjoy goods without becoming their slave.

The Rule of Saint Benedict (sixth century), which organized the life of thousands of monasteries, is a school of measure. It calls discernment (*discretio*) "the mother of virtues" (chap. 64). It balances prayer, work, and reading, and affirms that "idleness is the enemy of the soul" (chap. 48). On the distribution of goods, it quotes the Acts of the Apostles: distribution was made "to each according to their need" (chap. 34); whoever needs less should give thanks, whoever needs more should be humbled by it, and so all will remain at peace.[11] Here, fifteen centuries before us, is a limpid formulation of differentiated equity. The motto *ora et labora* ("pray and work"), often attributed to the Rule, does not appear in it in that form: it sums up its spirit and dates from a much later period.

Around 1225, Francis of Assisi composed the *Canticle of the Creatures*, in which he praises God for "Brother Sun," "Sister Moon," "Sister Water," and "our Sister Mother Earth, who sustains and governs us" (our translation). This kinship with the living world inspired, eight centuries later, the title of the encyclical *Laudato si'*.

Catholic Social Teaching

Since *Rerum novarum* (Leo XIII, 1891), the Catholic Church has developed a social teaching founded on the dignity of the person, the common good, the universal destination of goods, subsidiarity, and solidarity (see chapter 4). In 2015, Pope Francis published *Laudato si'*, on care for our common home. In it he develops an "integral ecology" and calls us to hear "both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor."[12]

On May 15, 2026, Leo XIV published *Magnifica Humanitas*, on safeguarding the human person in the time of artificial intelligence. Several passages speak directly to the language of conscious balance, beginning with its warning that "even unchecked growth can give rise to impoverishment" (no. 113; see chapters 1 and 7).[13] The encyclical also stresses that solidarity is fully solidarity only "when it becomes a conscious choice."[14] This is a **convergence of criteria**, not an endorsement: the encyclical's foundation is theological, that of Equiconscism is not, and the encyclical emphasizes accepted limits where Equiconscism speaks of dynamic balance (see chapter 7).

Other Christian Voices

Christianity is plural. The sociologist Max Weber linked the Protestant ethic of work and thrift to the rise of capitalism (1904–1905); his thesis, much debated, reminds us that religious convictions also shape economic behavior.[15] In 1983, the World Council of Churches launched a process on "Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation." In Orthodoxy, Ecumenical Patriarch Dimitrios I instituted in 1989 a day of prayer for creation on September 1, and his successor Bartholomew I has made ecology a major theme of his ministry.[16]

12.4 Islam: The Balance, the Middle Way, Stewardship

Al-mīzān, the Balance

The Qur'an makes the balance (*al-mīzān*) a cosmic and moral sign. In sura 55, *Ar-Rahmān* ("The Most Merciful"), the order of the heavens and human fairness are set side by side: "And the heaven, He raised it high. And He set up the balance, so that you do not transgress in the weighing: give [always] full weight, and do not skimp in the weighing" (55:7–9, our translation).[17] The balance of the cosmos and the balance of the marketplace belong to the same order. Elsewhere, the Qur'an associates the sending down of the Scriptures and of the balance with the establishment of justice among human beings (57:25).

Ummatan wasatan: The Community of the Middle Way

Verse 2:143 calls the community of believers *ummatan wasatan*, which M. Hamidullah translates into French as *communauté de justes* ("a community of the just") and which others render as "the community of the middle way": the word *wasat* designates the middle, balance, what is just because it stands between the extremes.[18] The same idea applies to the use of goods. The Qur'an describes the servants of the Most Merciful as "those who, when they spend, are neither extrava-

gant nor miserly, but keep to the just mean" (25:67), and it enjoins: "eat and drink, but do not commit excess, for He [Allah] does not love those who commit excess" (7:31) (our translations).[19] Excess (*isrāf*) and waste are moral faults.

Zakat, Stewardship, and the Purposes of the Law

Zakat, one of the five pillars of Islam, requires the annual payment of a share of one's wealth (traditionally 2.5% of savings above a threshold, the *nisāb*) to people in need. It establishes a regular mechanism of redistribution, which "purifies" wealth by making it circulate.

The human being is designated as *khalīfa* on the Earth: "I am going to place upon the earth a vicegerent (*khalīfa*)" (2:30, our translation).[20] Many contemporary Muslim thinkers understand this status as stewardship: the Earth is entrusted, not owned. Finally, the legal theory of the *maqāsid al-sharīʿa* ("purposes of the law"), formulated notably by al-Ghazālī (eleventh–twelfth centuries) and later al-Shātibī (fourteenth century), identifies what the law must protect: religion, life, intellect, progeny, and property.[21] This approach through purposes, rather than through the letter alone, is drawn on today to think through economic and environmental ethics. In 2015, Muslim religious leaders and scholars adopted in Istanbul an *Islamic Declaration on Global Climate Change*.[22]

The prophetic tradition also formulates the golden rule: "None of you truly believes until he loves for his brother what he loves for himself" (hadith transmitted by Anas ibn Mālik, reported by al-Bukhārī and Muslim, our translation).[23]

12.5 Hinduism and the Traditions Born in India

Dharma: That Which Sustains

The Sanskrit word *dharma* comes from a root meaning "to hold, to sustain." Dharma is the order that sustains the world, society, and the person, and the duty that flows from it for each according to their situation. It extends the Vedic notion of *ṛta*, cosmic order. The classical tradition distinguishes four legitimate aims of life: dharma, prosperity (*artha*), pleasure (*kāma*), and liberation (*mokṣa*). Wealth and pleasure are not condemned; they are legitimate as long as they remain framed by dharma. This is a vision of balance among the dimensions of existence.

The *Bhagavad Gita*: Equanimity and the Good of the World

In the *Bhagavad Gita*, Krishna teaches the warrior Arjuna to act without being the prisoner of the fruits of action: "Established in yoga, perform your actions, renouncing attachment, the same in success and in failure; evenness of mind (*samatva*) is called yoga" (2:48, our translation).[24] Equanimity is not indifference: it is the inner stability that makes right action possible. Further on, Krishna urges action with a view to *lokasaṃgraha*, the maintenance and cohesion of the world (3:20): the sage acts without attachment, "desiring the good of the world" (3:25).[25] Here we find both the awareness of overall impact and the call to lead by example that lies at the heart of the ninth key question.

The notion of *karma* is often misunderstood in the West as fate. It refers first of all to the law of consequences: every action produces effects, which return to the one who acts. It is an ethic of responsibility. The *Mahābhārata* formulates the golden rule: "One should never do that to another which one regards as injurious to one's own self. This, in brief, is the rule of Righteousness" (trans. K. M. Ganguli).[26]

Jainism

Jainism, a distinct Indian tradition, places at its center nonviolence (*ahiṃsā*) toward all living beings, non-attachment to possessions (*aparigraha*), and the doctrine of the plurality of viewpoints (*anekāntavāda*), according to which no single perspective grasps the whole of reality.[27] Sufficiency, respect for the living world, and widening the gaze come together here.

12.6 Buddhism: The Middle Way and Interdependence

The Middle Way

According to tradition, the Buddha's first teaching, delivered near Benares, begins by rejecting two extremes: the pursuit of sensual pleasures and self-mortification. Between the two lies the "middle way," which leads to peace and awakening: the Noble Eightfold Path.[28] Another text illustrates this balance very concretely. A monk named Sona is exhausting himself through excessive zeal. The Buddha asks him, since he had been a musician, whether his lute played in tune when its strings were too taut, or too slack. No, Sona answers: only when they were tuned. The Buddha then invites him to find the right tuning for his effort.[29] The image of the lute joins that of the pendulum: neither too much nor too little, but the right tension.

Interdependence and Mindfulness

Buddhism teaches "dependent origination" (*pratītyasamutpāda*): nothing exists by itself alone; everything arises in dependence on other conditions. The Vietnamese teacher Thich Nhat Hanh rendered this idea with the coinage "interbeing." It is a solid philosophical basis for systems thinking: our economic, social, and ecological decisions are caught in a web of causes and effects.

Mindfulness (*sati*), lucid attention to the present moment, has become in the West a widely studied practice, often detached from its religious setting. The four "immeasurables" (*brahmavihāra*)—loving-kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy, and equanimity—describe a balanced inner disposition toward all beings. The golden rule takes the form here of identification with others: "All tremble at violence; life is dear to all. Putting oneself in the place of another, one should not kill nor cause another to kill" (*Dhammapada*, 130, trans. Acharya Buddharakkhita).[30]

Buddhist Economics and Gross National Happiness

In 1966, the economist E. F. Schumacher published an essay entitled "Buddhist Economics," later included in *Small Is Beautiful* (1973): in it he contrasts the maximization of consumption with the pursuit of maximum well-being with minimum consumption (see chapter 4). The Kingdom of Bhutan has made "Gross National Happiness" a public objective, enshrined in its 2008 Constitution (art. 9, sec. 2) (see chapter 5).[31]

12.7 Taoism: Water, Non-Action, and the Art of Stopping

The *Tao Te Ching* ("The Book of the Way and of Virtue") is attributed by tradition to Laozi, in the sixth century BCE; scholars instead date its compilation to the fourth–third centuries BCE, the oldest known manuscripts (Guodian) going back to around 300 BCE.[32] The text is brief and difficult; its translations diverge widely. We quote it here from the translation by Stanislas Julien (1842), one of the first into French, which has the advantage of being in the public domain; the English renderings of it are ours, and we invite readers to compare them with more recent translations.[33]

Water. "The man of superior virtue is like water. Water excels at doing good to all beings, and it does not strive" (chap. 8). Water takes the shape of what holds it, flows downward, nourishes without dominating, and yet wears away stone. It is the image of a gentle strength, which acts through continuity rather than constraint.

Movement and harmony. "The Tao produced one; one produced two; two produced three; three produced all beings" (chap. 42). The same chapter evokes the two complementary principles, *yin* and *yang*, whose union produces harmony. In Chinese thought, they are not opposed as good and evil: each contains the seed of the other and turns into it. Balance is a movement of alternation, not a fixed point—which is also what the pendulum of Equiconscism says.

Non-action. *Wu wei*, often translated as "non-action," does not mean passivity. It designates right action, which does not force, which goes with the movement of things instead of thwarting it. We may see in it the hand that holds the pendulum "without gripping" (see chapter 7).

Knowing how to be content, knowing when to stop. "It is better not to fill a vessel than to try to keep it (when it is full)" (chap. 9). "He who knows how to be content is rich enough" (chap. 33). "There is no greater misfortune than not knowing how to be content. There is no greater calamity than the desire to acquire" (chap. 46). Finally, chapter 77 compares the way of Heaven to the stringing of a bow: it lowers what is too high, raises what is too low, takes from what is superfluous to make up what is lacking, whereas the way of men often does the opposite (paraphrase). Rarely has a tradition formulated so clearly the idea of a corridor of right measure.

A caution is in order: many "Tao quotations" circulating today are apocryphal. The sentence "It is not frozen balance that brings peace, but the constant dance of polarities," for example, appears in none of the eighty-one chapters.

12.8 Confucianism: The Doctrine of the Mean and Harmony Without Uniformity

The *Zhongyong*, traditionally translated as *The Doctrine of the Mean*, is a chapter of the *Book of Rites* that became one of the "Four Books" of Confucianism in the twelfth century. Its first chapter defines the mean (*zhong*, which Legge renders as "equilibrium") as the state in which the emotions —joy, anger, sorrow, pleasure—have not yet been stirred, and harmony (*he*) as the state in which, once stirred, they act in due measure (see chapter 6). The mean is "the great root" of the world, harmony "the universal path"; when they are fully realized, heaven and earth find their order and all beings are nourished (freely adapted from J. Legge's translation).[34] Inner balance and the order of the world are bound together: this is the second key question of Equiconscism.

At the center of Confucian ethics is *ren*, humaneness or benevolence, which is cultivated in relationships. Asked for a single word that could guide an entire life, Confucius answers: reciprocity (*shu*)—"What you would not want done to yourself, do not do to others" (*Analects*, 15:24, our translation).[35] Another maxim of the *Analects* sheds light on differentiated equity: "The noble person seeks harmony, not uniformity; the petty person seeks uniformity, not harmony" (13:23, our translation).[36] Harmony, as in music, requires different voices.

In the eleventh century, the Neo-Confucian thinker Zhang Zai extended this bond to all beings in his *Western Inscription*: "All people are my brothers and sisters, and all things are my companions" (our translation).[37]

12.9 Indigenous Wisdom: Reciprocity, Future Generations, Community

Indigenous peoples do not form a single bloc. Their traditions are many, often oral, and they have too often been idealized or appropriated by others. They must therefore be quoted with care and allowed, as far as possible, to speak in their own voices and through their own institutions.

The Great Law of Peace of the Haudenosaunee. The confederacy of the Haudenosaunee (Iroquois) rests on an oral constitution, the Great Law of Peace. In the version recorded in the early twentieth century by the ethnologist Arthur C. Parker, the chiefs are exhorted to set aside their personal interest and to keep in view not only the present but also the generations to come, including those "whose faces are yet beneath the surface of the ground."[38] The "seventh generation principle," often cited today, notably by the Onondaga chief Oren Lyons, extends this spirit; but the precise formula does not appear in the early written versions, and it should be presented as a contemporary expression of this tradition.

Buen vivir. In the Andes, the Quechua notion of *sumak kawsay* and the Aymara notion of *suma qamaña* designate a good life in harmony with the community and with nature. They were written into the Constitution of Ecuador (2008), which also recognizes rights of nature (*Pacha Mama*), and into that of Bolivia (2009).[39] The gap between these texts and certain extractive policies pursued since then shows that legal enshrinement is not enough: balance must be practiced, not merely proclaimed.

Ubuntu. In several Bantu languages of southern Africa, the proverb *umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu* means that a person is a person through other persons. The Kenyan theologian and philosopher John S. Mbiti summed up the African conception of the person, of which *ubuntu* is one expression, in the formula: "I am, because we are; and since we are, therefore I am."[40] Desmond Tutu made it a foundation of reconciliation in South Africa after apartheid. *Ubuntu* does not dissolve the person into the group: it affirms that one becomes fully oneself in relationship.

12.10 Philosophical Wisdom and Secular Humanisms

Conscious balance needs no religious foundation in order to be thought through. Philosophical traditions lead there too.

Stoicism. For the Stoics, wisdom consists in living in accordance with nature and with reason, in distinguishing what depends on us from what does not (Epictetus), and in knowing oneself to be a member of a whole. The Stoic Hierocles (second century) described the human being at the center of concentric circles—self, family, fellow citizens, humanity—and urged us to "draw in" these circles, to treat those farthest away as those nearest.[41] It is an exact image of widening the gaze. The emperor Marcus Aurelius sums it up: "What is not good for the swarm is not good for the bee either" (*Meditations*, VI, 54, our translation).[42]

Humanism. From Terence's line "I am a human being, and nothing human is alien to me" to the Kantian demand to treat humanity, in oneself as in others, always as an end and never merely as a means (1785), humanism has founded dignity on reason and freedom. In the twentieth century, Hans Jonas extended responsibility to future generations (see chapter 6). The philosopher André Comte-Sponville has defended the possibility of a "spirituality without God," made of fidelity, love, and openness to reality.[43]

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948). Its first article states: "All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood."[44] The word "conscience" appears there explicitly, linked to brotherhood. *Magnifica Humanitas*, following Saint John Paul II, calls this declaration "one of the highest expressions of the human conscience of our time":[45] here a religious text recognizes a secular text as a common good.

The Earth Charter (2000). The fruit of a worldwide consultation, launched at the Peace Palace in The Hague on June 29, 2000, it opens with these words: "We stand at a critical moment in Earth's history, a time when humanity must choose its future." Its fourth principle calls on us to "Secure Earth's bounty and beauty for present and future generations" (see chapter 11), recognizing "that the freedom of action of each generation is qualified by the needs of future generations."[46] In it we can read a secular, intercultural, and contemporary formulation of most of the intuitions encountered in this chapter.

12.11 The Common Thread: The Golden Rule, Measure, Responsibility

The Golden Rule

The most visible thread linking these traditions is the golden rule. It exists in a negative form ("do not do to others what you would not want done to you") and in a positive form ("do for others what you would want done for you"). The Talmud relates that a gentile asked Hillel to teach him the whole Torah while he stood on one foot; Hillel replied: "What is hateful to you, do not do to your neighbor: that is the whole Torah; the rest is commentary; go and study" (our translation).[47] In 1993, in Chicago, the *Declaration Toward a Global Ethic* of the Parliament of the World's Religions, drafted at the initiative of the theologian Hans Küng, placed this rule, together with the demand that every human being be treated humanely, at the heart of a shared ethic[48] (see chapter 10).

Two objections deserve a hearing, because they enrich the rule. Kant held that it could not serve as a universal moral law, since it starts from what each person desires for themselves.[49] And George Bernard Shaw quipped: "Do not do unto others as you would that they should do unto

you. Their tastes may not be the same."[50] These objections fit Equiconscism exactly: not everyone needs the same thing. Rightly understood, then, the golden rule asks us to **listen** before acting—the second movement of the cycle of conscious balance. To put oneself in another's place is not to lend them one's own desires; it is to let them speak.

Comparative Table

Tradition	Balance and Measure	Consciousness and Responsibility	Justice and Sharing	Time and the Living World	Golden Rule (Reference)
Ancient Egypt	Maat, the just order; weighing of the heart	"Connective justice": answering for one another	Just weights and measures (*Book of the Dead*, 125)	Maat to be maintained ceaselessly against *isfet*	—
Judaism	Sabbath, limit; *bal tashḥit*	Avot 1:14; 2:16	*Tzedakah*; jubilee (Leviticus 25)	Sabbatical year; "the land is mine" (Leviticus 25:23)	Leviticus 19:18; Hillel (Shabbat 31a)
Christianity	Temperance; *discretio* (Rule of Saint Benedict)	Love of neighbor; Good Samaritan	Social teaching; "to each according to their need"	"A time for every matter under heaven" (Ecclesiastes 3:1); *Laudato si'*	Matthew 7:12
Islam	*Mīzān* (55:7–9); *wasat* (2:143; 25:67)	*Khalīfa* (2:30)	Zakat; *maqāsid*	Prohibition of excess (7:31)	Hadith (al-Bukhārī, Muslim)
Hinduism	Dharma; *samatva* (BG 2:48)	Karma; *lokasaṃgraha* (BG 3:20–25)	Four aims of life	*Ṛta*, cosmic order	*Mahābhārata*, XIII
Jainism	*Aparigraha*	*Anekāntavāda*	Non-possession	*Ahiṃsā* toward all living beings	—
Buddhism	Middle way; Sona's lute	*Sati*; interdependence	Buddhist economics	Compassion for all beings	*Dhammapada*, 129–130
Taoism	Knowing when to stop (chaps. 9, 44, 46)	*Wu wei*, right action	Chap. 77: take from the superfluous, make up what is lacking	Water; *yin-yang*	—
Confucianism	*Zhongyong*: equilibrium and harmony	*Ren*; leading by example	Harmony without uniformity (13:23)	Zhang Zai: "all things are my companions"	*Analects*, 15:24
Indigenous wisdom	Reciprocity; *buen vivir*	*Ubuntu*: "I am, because we are"	Community	Generations to come (Haudenosaunee); rights of nature	—
Stoicism and humanisms	Living according to nature and reason	Hierocles' circles; Jonas	Dignity (Kant; UDHR, art. 1)	Earth Charter (2000)	Global ethic (1993)

Reading: this table brings notions together to facilitate dialogue; it does not mean that these notions are equivalent. A dash indicates that we did not find a formulation sufficiently reliable for this chapter.

A Common Grammar, Different Sources

What should we take from all this? First, that the intuition of conscious balance is not a recent invention. From the banks of the Nile to the Andes, from China to the Mediterranean, human beings have understood that excess destroys, that justice requires right measure, that each of us answers for our acts before others and before those who will come, and that the living world does not belong to us. Second, that these traditions invented **institutions** to make this intuition workable: the Sabbath and the jubilee, zakat, the monastic rule, the councils of the Haudenosaunee. Equiconscism stands in this lineage when it offers concrete tools: the ten key questions, the scorecards, the cycle of conscious balance (see chapters 8 and 14).

Finally, that convergence does not erase difference. For the believer, measure may come from God; for the Buddhist, from the understanding of interdependence; for the secular humanist, from reason and dignity. Equiconscism does not decide among these foundations. It asks no one to renounce their source. It offers a common grammar—measure, consciousness, responsibility, differentiated equity, concern for future generations—in which everyone can recognize what they already carry. *Magnifica Humanitas* says as much in its own way, affirming that "at the heart of the great spiritual paths lies a message of peace."[51] Dialogue among traditions is not a luxury: it is one of the conditions of an inclusive society built on solidarity (see chapter 10, section 10.20).

> **KEY QUESTION** Key Question
>
> In your own tradition—religious, spiritual, philosophical, or familial—what saying, what practice, or what institution helps you hold to right measure? And what could you learn, without giving up who you are, from a tradition that is not your own?

In Brief

- The great religious and philosophical traditions converge on a few intuitions—**measure, justice, responsibility, compassion, concern for future generations**—without merging into one another; this chapter's approach is respectful and non-syncretic.
- The **balance** is a shared symbol: the weighing of the heart before Maat, the *mīzān* of the Qur'an (55:7–9), the justice of *tzedakah*; so is the **mean**: *wasat* (2:143), the Buddhist middle way, the Confucian *Zhongyong*, Christian temperance.
- Several traditions instituted **mechanisms for returning to balance**: the Sabbath, the sabbatical year and the jubilee (Leviticus 25), zakat, the monastic rule, "to each according to their need."
- **Time** and the **living world** are at the heart of these wisdom traditions: "a time for every matter under heaven" (Ecclesiastes 3:1), the water of the *Tao Te Ching*, the generations "whose faces are yet beneath the surface of the ground," the Earth Charter (2000).
- The **golden rule** runs through nearly every tradition; reread in the light of differentiated equity, it begins with **listening** to what the other person really needs.
- Equiconscism offers a **common grammar**, not a religion: everyone can recognize themselves in it, from within their faith or their absence of faith.

Notes

1. Translations used in the French edition: Bible, trans. Louis Segond (1910); Qur'an, trans. Muhammad Hamidullah (version published on quran.com, accessed September 30, 2026); *Tao Te King*, trans. Stanislas Julien (Paris: Imprimerie royale, 1842). In this English edition, Ecclesiastes 3:1 and Leviticus 19:18 are quoted from the New Revised Standard Version Updated Edition (NRSVue); the other biblical verses, the Qur'an, and the *Tao Te Ching* are rendered into English by us from these French translations and marked "our translation," as are all other translations we made ourselves. Published English translations are named where used.
2. Jan Assmann, *Ma'at. Gerechtigkeit und Unsterblichkeit im Alten Ägypten* (Munich: C. H. Beck, 1990); in French: *Maât, l'Égypte pharaonique et l'idée de justice sociale* (Paris: Julliard, 1989).
3. *Book of the Dead*, chap. 125 ("declaration of innocence"); French trans.: Paul Barguet, *Le Livre des morts des anciens Égyptiens* (Paris: Cerf, 1967) (paraphrase).
4. Leviticus 25:23, our translation (French edition: trans. L. Segond, 1910).
5. Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah*, "Laws of Gifts to the Poor" (*Matnot Aniyim*), 10:7–14.
6. Mishnah, *Gittin*, 4:2–9 (*mipnei tikkun ha-olam*); on the development of the concept, see Gershom Scholem, *Les Grands Courants de la mystique juive*, trans. M.-M. Davy (Paris: Payot, 1950) (on Luria).
7. Mishnah, *Avot*, 1:14. Text and English translation: Sefaria, accessed September 30, 2026, https://www.sefaria.org/Pirkei_Avot.1.14.
8. Mishnah, *Avot*, 2:16 (Sefaria numbering; 2:21 in some editions), accessed September 30, 2026, https://www.sefaria.org/Pirkei_Avot.2.16.
9. Ecclesiastes 3:1, NRSVue (French edition: trans. L. Segond, 1910).
10. Leviticus 19:18, NRSVue; Matthew 7:12, our translation (French edition: trans. L. Segond, 1910); see also Luke 6:31.
11. *Rule of Saint Benedict*, chaps. 34 (quoting Acts 4:35), 48, and 64 (paraphrases and our translation from the Latin).
12. Francis, Encyclical Letter *Laudato si'* (May 24, 2015), no. 49; passage taken up in Leo XIV, *Magnifica Humanitas*, no. 43.
13. Leo XIV, Encyclical Letter *Magnifica Humanitas* (May 15, 2026), no. 113, accessed October 16, 2026, https://www.vatican.va/content/leo-xiv/en/encyclicals/documents/20260515-magnifica-humanitas.html.
14. Ibid., no. 74.
15. Max Weber, *Die protestantische Ethik und der Geist des Kapitalismus* (1904–1905); French trans.: *L'Éthique protestante et l'esprit du capitalisme*, trans. J.-P. Grossein (Paris: Gallimard, 2003).
16. World Council of Churches, Sixth Assembly, Vancouver, 1983; Ecumenical Patriarchate, message of Patriarch Dimitrios I for September 1, 1989.
17. Qur'an 55:7–9, our translation from the French trans. of M. Hamidullah (quran.com, accessed September 30, 2026); 57:25: "sent down with them the Book and the balance, so that people may uphold justice" (our translation from the same French trans.).
18. Qur'an 2:143, French trans. M. Hamidullah ("Et aussi Nous avons fait de vous une communauté de justes pour que vous soyez témoins…").
19. Qur'an 25:67 and 7:31, our translation from the French trans. of M. Hamidullah.
20. Qur'an 2:30, our translation from the French trans. of M. Hamidullah.
21. Al-Ghazālī, *al-Mustasfā min 'ilm al-usūl*; al-Shātibī, *al-Muwāfaqāt fī usūl al-sharī'a*. Overview: Jasser Auda, *Maqasid al-Shariah as Philosophy of Islamic Law* (London/Washington: IIIT, 2008).
22. *Islamic Declaration on Global Climate Change*, Istanbul, August 18, 2015.
23. Al-Bukhārī, *Sahīh*, Book of Faith, no. 13; Muslim, *Sahīh*, Book of Faith, no. 45; included in al-Nawawī, *Forty Hadith*, no. 13. Text and English translation, accessed September 30, 2026, https://sunnah.com/bukhari:13 and https://sunnah.com/muslim:45a.
24. *Bhagavad Gita*, 2:48 ("yoga-sthaḥ kuru karmāṇi saṅgaṃ tyaktvā dhanañjaya / siddhy-asiddhyoḥ samo bhūtvā samatvaṃ yoga ucyate").
25. *Bhagavad Gita*, 3:20 and 3:25 (our translation).
26. *Mahābhārata*, book XIII (*Anuśāsana Parva*), section 113, 8; English trans. K. M. Ganguli (1883–1896).
27. See Paul Dundas, *The Jains*, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 2002).
28. *Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta*, *Saṃyutta Nikāya*, 56:11; English trans. Ñāṇamoli Thera, accesstoinsight.org, accessed September 30, 2026.
29. *Soṇa Sutta*, *Aṅguttara Nikāya*, 6:55; English trans. Thanissaro Bhikkhu, accesstoinsight.org (paraphrase).
30. *Dhammapada*, 130; English trans. Acharya Buddharakkhita, accesstoinsight.org, accessed September 30, 2026.
31. E. F. Schumacher, "Buddhist Economics" (1966), included in *Small Is Beautiful* (London: Blond & Briggs, 1973); Constitution of the Kingdom of Bhutan (2008), art. 9, sec. 2.
32. On the dating, see Anne Cheng, *Histoire de la pensée chinoise* (Paris: Seuil, 1997), chap. 7.
33. Laozi, *Tao Te King. Le Livre de la voie et de la vertu*, trans. Stanislas Julien (Paris: Imprimerie royale, 1842), chaps. 8, 9, 33, 42, 44, and 46; text accessed September 30, 2026, https://www.chineancienne.fr; English renderings ours. Chap. 77: paraphrase. Another reference translation: Liou Kia-hway, in *Philosophes taoïstes* (Paris: Gallimard, "Bibliothèque de la Pléiade," 1980).

34. *Zhongyong*, chap. 1, 4–5; English trans. James Legge, *The Doctrine of the Mean* (Oxford, 1893), sacred-texts.com, accessed September 30, 2026.
35. Confucius, *Analects* (*Lunyu*), 15:24 (15:23 in Legge's numbering); see also 12:2.
36. Confucius, *Analects*, 13:23 (君子和而不同，小人同而不和).
37. Zhang Zai, *Ximing* ("Western Inscription"), eleventh century (民吾同胞，物吾與也).
38. Arthur C. Parker, *The Constitution of the Five Nations, or The Iroquois Book of the Great Law*, New York State Museum Bulletin no. 184 (Albany: University of the State of New York, 1916), "The Great Binding Law," art. 28 ("…even those whose faces are yet beneath the surface of the ground — the unborn of the future Nation") (paraphrase). The expression "seventh generation" does not appear in this text.
39. Constitution of the Republic of Ecuador (2008), preamble and art. 71; Constitution of the Plurinational State of Bolivia (2009), art. 8.
40. John S. Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy* (London: Heinemann, 1969); Desmond Tutu, *No Future Without Forgiveness* (New York: Doubleday, 1999).
41. Hierocles, fragment preserved by Stobaeus, *Anthology*, IV, 27, 23.
42. Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations*, VI, 54.
43. Terence, *Heauton Timorumenos*, l. 77 (our translation); Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* (1785); André Comte-Sponville, *L'Esprit de l'athéisme. Introduction à une spiritualité sans Dieu* (Paris: Albin Michel, 2006).
44. United Nations, *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, December 10, 1948, art. 1.
45. Leo XIV, *Magnifica Humanitas*, no. 54.
46. Earth Charter (2000), preamble, principle 4, and principle 4a, original English text, Earth Charter International, accessed October 16, 2026, https://earthcharter.org/read-the-earth-charter/preamble/ and https://earthcharter.org/read-the-earth-charter/respect-and-care-for-the-community-of-life/.
47. Babylonian Talmud, *Shabbat* 31a; text and English translation, accessed September 30, 2026, https://www.sefaria.org/Shabbat.31a.
48. Parliament of the World's Religions, *Declaration Toward a Global Ethic*, Chicago, September 4, 1993; see Hans Küng and Karl-Josef Kuschel, eds., *Manifeste pour une éthique planétaire* (Paris: Cerf, 1995).
49. Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* (1785), second section, note (Ak. IV, 430).
50. George Bernard Shaw, *Man and Superman* (1903), "Maxims for Revolutionists."
51. Leo XIV, *Magnifica Humanitas*, no. 223.

CHAPTER 13

Artificial Intelligence: A Multiplier of Balance or of Imbalance? The Ten Commandments of AI

> *"Technology is neither good nor bad; nor is it neutral."*
> — Melvin Kranzberg, "Technology and History: 'Kranzberg's Laws,'" 1986[1]

> *"[...] clear direction for technological progress without allowing the heart to regress."*
> — Leo XIV, *Magnifica Humanitas*, no. 126, 2026[2]

Rarely has a technology been adopted as quickly as generative artificial intelligence (AI). In less than four years, it has moved from the laboratory into the offices, classrooms, and phones of hundreds of millions of people. It promises to free up time. It can also devour it.

Two narratives collide: one heralds unprecedented abundance, the other a collapse—jobs destroyed, truth dissolved, power concentrated, control lost. Equiconscism chooses neither euphoria nor panic. It asks a different question: **does AI amplify balance or imbalance?**

The answer lies not in the machine but in the hand that holds the pendulum (see chapter 7). In hands that act without awareness, a powerful AI speeds up the runaway. Properly governed and placed at the service of a clear intention, it can become an ideal support for, and multiplier of, conscious balance. After taking stock of the current situation and examining the promises, the risks, and the existing frameworks, this chapter proposes **the Ten Commandments of Equiconscist AI**: ten brief, solemn, and operational guideposts for designers, leaders, and users.

13.1 AI in 2026: Taking Stock

Massive and Rapid Adoption

According to Stanford's *AI Index*, 78% of the organizations surveyed were using AI in 2024, compared with 55% in 2023.[3] The 2026 edition reports that this share reached 88% in 2025, and that generative AI is now used in at least one business function by 70% of organizations.[4]

Spectacular Gains in Capability

On the *Humanity's Last Exam* benchmark, the best models exceeded 50% correct answers in April 2026, compared with 8.8% a year earlier.[5] The cost of using a model performing at the level of GPT-3.5 fell more than 280-fold between late 2022 and late 2024.[6] This progress remains uneven: systems capable of solving doctoral-level problems can fail to read the time on an analog clock.[7] Power is not understanding.

Unprecedented—and Concentrated—Investment

Global corporate investment in AI more than doubled in 2025, reaching about $581.7 billion; private investment amounted to $344.7 billion, of which $170.9 billion went to generative AI alone.[8] In 2025, more than 90% of the models deemed "notable" by the *AI Index* came from industry (93, compared with 2 from academia); the United States produced 59 of them, China 35, and South Korea 8.[9] Global computing capacity dedicated to AI has grown about 3.3-fold per year since 2022, and a single chip supplier holds more than 60% of it.[10] AI is an increasingly powerful good, produced by fewer and fewer players.

A Very Real Material Footprint

AI is not immaterial. According to the International Energy Agency (IEA), data centers consumed about 415 TWh of electricity in 2024, or 1.5% of global consumption; this figure is expected to more than double to about 945 TWh in 2030—equivalent to Japan's current consumption—with AI as the main driver of this growth.[11] To this must be added cooling water, the metals in the chips, and the emissions from training the largest models: about 72,800 metric tons of CO_2 equivalent estimated for training a single frontier model in 2025 (xAI's Grok 4), according to the *AI Index*.[12]

Work Transformed More Than Eliminated—for Now

The International Labour Organization (ILO) estimates that one job in four worldwide is potentially exposed to generative AI; the share rises to 34% in high-income countries and falls to 11% in low-income countries. Clerical jobs, in which women are overrepresented, are the most exposed, and the ILO concludes that the transformation of tasks, rather than their outright disappearance, is the most likely effect.[13] As early as 2023, the OECD stressed that a significant share of employment in its member countries is in occupations at high risk of automation.[14] The first effects are appearing among the youngest workers: in the United States, employment of software developers aged 22 to 25 has fallen by nearly 20%, according to data cited in the *AI Index* 2026, while experienced positions are holding steady.[15]

Ambivalent Trust and Rising Incidents

In the Ipsos surveys cited by Stanford, 59% of respondents in 2025 believed that the benefits of AI outweigh its drawbacks; yet 52% said that AI products make them nervous.[16] The *AI Incident Database* recorded 362 documented incidents in 2025, compared with 233 in 2024. Over the same period, the transparency of the major developers declined: their average score on the Foundation Model Transparency Index fell from 58 to 40 between 2024 and 2025.[17]

> **FOCUS AI in 2025–2026: Some Orders of Magnitude**
>
> | Indicator | Value | Source | |—|—|—| | Organizations using AI | 55% (2023) → 78% (2024) → 88% (2025) | Stanford *AI Index* 2025 and 2026 | | Corporate investment in AI | ≈ $581.7 billion (2025) | Stanford *AI Index* 2026 | | Data center electricity | 415 TWh (2024) → ≈ 945 TWh (2030, projection) | IEA, *Energy and AI*, 2025 | | Documented AI incidents | 233 (2024) → 362 (2025) | Stanford *AI Index* 2026 |

A technology that advances faster than the institutions and the human awareness meant to steer it: that is the very definition of a pendulum running away.

13.2 The Promises: An Ideal Multiplier, If Used and Governed Well

It would be dishonest to see AI as nothing but a threat.

In health care, AI helps read medical images, detect certain cancers earlier, and predict the structure of proteins—work recognized by the 2024 Nobel Prize in Chemistry, awarded in part to Demis Hassabis and John Jumper for AlphaFold. The US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) authorized 223 AI-enabled medical devices in 2023 alone.[18]

In science, publications on AI-assisted drug discovery have more than doubled in two years.[19]

In education and accessibility—tutoring, translation, transcription for deaf people, image description for blind people—AI can reduce very concrete inequalities of access.

At work, it can lighten repetitive tasks, freeing room for judgment, relationships, and creativity.

David Fiorucci sums up this ambivalence in a single sentence: "AI is a force multiplier: it multiplies clarity and value… or it multiplies confusion and damage."[20] Multiplied by a right intention, clear governance, and competent people, AI becomes **an ideal support for, and multiplier of, conscious balance**. Multiplied by haste, opacity, and the pursuit of profit alone, it becomes an accelerator of imbalance.

13.3 The Risks: Where the Pendulum Can Run Away

The Concentration of Power

A handful of companies control the chips, the data centers, the most powerful models, and the information platforms used by billions of people. This concentration bears directly on the seventh key question, **Power and Consent**: who decides the rules that an AI applies to millions of people, and with what consent?

Manipulation and Disinformation

In *Les ingénieurs du chaos* (the engineers of chaos, 2019), Giuliano da Empoli showed how political strategists exploit algorithms to harness anger and polarize; then, in *L'heure des prédateurs* [The Hour of the Predators] (2025), he described a world in which political and technological actors profit from disorder instead of regulating it[21] (see chapter 1). Generative AI lowers the cost of deception still further: fake recordings, fake images, personalized messages at scale. The "fox" in the illustration of the hen (see chapter 7) now has industrial tools at its disposal.

Cognitive Debt

A study by the MIT Media Lab (Kosmyna et al., 2025) compared people writing essays on their own, with a search engine, or with a conversational assistant. Those who used the assistant showed the weakest brain connectivity, remembered their own text less well, and felt less ownership of it; the researchers speak of "cognitive debt."[22] The sample is small (54 participants, 18 in the final session), and the study, still a preprint, needs replication. But it is consistent with older and more robust findings: "automation bias," the tendency to follow the machine even when it is wrong, and the "ironies of automation," whereby the more automated a system is, the less capable humans are of taking back control when they must.[23]

Bias and Discrimination

An AI learns from the past, and the past contains injustices. In 2018, Joy Buolamwini and Timnit Gebru showed that commercial facial recognition systems made far more errors on darker-skinned women than on lighter-skinned men.[24] Wherever an AI sorts people—in hiring, lending, justice, social assistance—it can reproduce inequalities at scale and render them invisible.

Surveillance, Work, and the Ecological Footprint

Biometric recognition, emotion analysis, profiling: AI makes possible surveillance of unprecedented precision, by states and companies alike. At work, beyond the number of jobs, it is the quality of work that is at stake: deskilling, algorithmic control of work pace, and the invisible labor of the people who annotate data or moderate content, often in low-wage countries. Finally, the electricity, water, and metals consumed by AI (see 13.1) put its growth in direct tension with the ecological ceiling of the corridor of right measure (see chapter 7). A superfluous query is not free for the living world.

The Dilution of Responsibility

When a decision passes through a model, a supplier, an integrator, and a user, who answers for it? The SALTER guide (*SALTER® — La boussole consciente pour un monde en mutation* [SALTER®: The conscious compass for a changing world]) describes this drift: "AI does not decide. It proposes."[25] But the comfort of the recommendation can erode the courage to decide. To the question "Who decided?" the answer ends up being a procedure rather than a name.

Autonomous Systems and Extreme Risks

So-called "agentic" systems increasingly act on their own. In the military sphere, weapons capable of selecting and attacking targets without human intervention raise a direct moral question. Finally, part of the scientific community warns of large-scale risks—malicious biological or cyber uses, loss of control over very advanced systems. Their probability is debated; their potential severity justifies vigilance.

> **KEY QUESTION** **The Multiplier Test**
>
> Before introducing an AI system, ask yourself: **what will this tool multiply among us**—our clarity or our confusion, our attention or our distraction, our fairness or our biases, our sufficiency or our waste? If the answer is uncertain, start by clarifying the intention.

13.4 Existing Frameworks: A Rich but Uneven Landscape

Over the past decade, researchers, states, international organizations, and religious communities have formulated principles. Knowing them makes it possible to situate this book's own contribution.

The Major Declarations of Principles

- **The Asilomar Principles (2017).** Adopted at the *Beneficial AI* conference organized by the Future of Life Institute, these twenty-three principles state that the goal of research should be to create "not undirected intelligence, but beneficial intelligence," and that "Humans should choose how and whether to delegate decisions to AI systems."[26]
- **The OECD Recommendation on AI (2019, revised in 2024).** The first intergovernmental standard (forty-seven adherents), it rests on five principles: inclusive growth, sustainable development, and well-being; human rights and democratic values, including fairness and privacy; transparency and explainability; robustness, security, and safety; and accountability.[27]
- **The UNESCO Recommendation on the Ethics of AI (2021).** Adopted by all 193 member states, it is the first global standard-setting instrument on the ethics of AI; it counts the flourishing of the environment and ecosystems among its values, alongside human rights, diversity, and peace.[28]
- **The *Rome Call for AI Ethics* (2020).** Signed on February 28, 2020, by the Pontifical Academy for Life, Microsoft, IBM, the FAO, and the Italian Ministry of Innovation, it promotes "algorethics" built around six principles: transparency, inclusion, responsibility, impartiality, reliability, and security and privacy.[29]

Binding Law

- **The EU Artificial Intelligence Act (EU AI Act, Regulation (EU) 2024/1689).** In force since August 1, 2024, it classifies systems according to their level of risk. Since February 2, 2025, it has prohibited certain practices deemed unacceptable—subliminal manipulation, exploitation of vulnerabilities, social scoring, and emotion recognition in the workplace and in schools, among others—and imposed an AI literacy obligation. Since August 2, 2025, obligations have applied to general-purpose AI models. The transparency obligations for generated content have applied since August 2, 2026.[30] In 2026, the so-called "digital omnibus" package (Regulation (EU) 2026/1744, in force since July 27, 2026) postponed the obligations for high-risk systems to December 2, 2027, for stand-alone systems, and to August 2, 2028, for those embedded in regulated products; it relaxed the AI literacy obligation and added a ban on systems that generate non-consensual intimate content of identifiable persons or child sexual abuse material; systems already on the market have a grace period until December 2, 2026, for the marking of generated content.[31] Simplification for some, backsliding for others.
- **The Council of Europe Framework Convention on Artificial Intelligence and Human Rights, Democracy and the Rule of Law (CETS No. 225).** Opened for signature on September 5, 2024, in Vilnius, it is the first legally binding international treaty devoted to AI. As of September 2026 it had twenty-one signatures, including those of the European Union, the United Kingdom, the United States, Canada, Japan, and Switzerland. The European Union ratified it in May 2026, becoming its first Party. Its entry into force requires five ratifications, including at least three

by member states of the Council of Europe: as of September 30, 2026, it is therefore not yet in force.[32]

Intergovernmental Processes

- **The G7 Hiroshima Process (2023)** produced, on October 30, 2023, guiding principles and a voluntary code of conduct for developers of advanced AI systems.[33]
- **The international summits**: the Bletchley Declaration (November 2023, twenty-eight countries and the European Union) addressed the safety of "frontier" models; in Seoul (May 2024), companies made voluntary safety commitments; in Paris (February 2025), a statement on "inclusive and sustainable" AI was signed by some sixty states, but not by the United States or the United Kingdom; in New Delhi (February 2026), the *AI Impact Summit* continued this cycle.[34] The thread running through these summits shows a shift from safety toward innovation, and the difficulty of maintaining a global consensus.

Switzerland's Position

Switzerland has chosen its own path. On February 12, 2025, the Federal Council decided to ratify the Council of Europe Convention and to adapt Swiss law accordingly, favoring sector-specific regulation (health, transport, and so on) over a general, European-style law; cross-sectoral regulation is limited to areas central to fundamental rights, such as data protection. Federal Councillor Albert Rösti signed the Convention in Strasbourg on March 27, 2025. According to the timetable announced in 2025, a draft for consultation is to be ready by the end of 2026, complemented by legally non-binding measures such as self-declaration agreements or industry solutions.[35] This approach, true to Swiss subsidiarity, is consistent with the principle of linking the levels that Equiconscism advocates: what matters most is played out as close as possible to actual uses, subject to shared floors of protection.

Magnifica Humanitas: A Convergent Voice

The encyclical of Leo XIV, published on May 15, 2026, is devoted entirely to "safeguarding the human person in the time of artificial intelligence." Without being a regulatory text, it formulates, in its own language, criteria that echo several of Equiconscism's intuitions.[36]

It first recalls what AI is not. Artificial intelligences do not "have a moral conscience, since they do not judge good and evil, grasp the ultimate meaning of situations, or bear responsibility for consequences" (no. 99). Consequently, "we cannot consider AI to be morally neutral" (no. 104). It then names an imbalance that this book places at the center of its diagnosis: the gap between the speed of technological growth and the slower development of awareness, norms, and institutions (no. 106, quoted in chapter 1). It warns against an ethics held captive: "A more moral AI is not enough if that morality is determined by a few" (no. 107). It calls for AI to be "disarmed," specifying: "To disarm does not mean rejecting technology, but preventing it from dominating humanity" (no. 110). Above all, it formulates a rule of balance very close to the image of the pendulum: "technical power, if left unbalanced, does not make us more capable; it makes us more isolated and more vulnerable to being dominated and excluded" (no. 113). Finally, it recalls that "Nothing in the world of AI is immaterial or magical" (no. 173) and that educating people about the use of AI "involves teaching them to decide when and for what purpose it ought not to be used" (no. 140).

This is a **convergence of criteria**, not an endorsement: the encyclical is grounded in a Christian anthropology, Equiconscism in a nondenominational approach (see chapters 7 and 12). The encyclical does not formulate "commandments" for AI; those that follow are the sole responsibility of this book.

David Fiorucci's Positions

In an interview published on March 28, 2026, conducted by Dave Drodge for his forthcoming book *AI, You, and the Future of Work*, David Fiorucci summarized his position as a leadership practitioner.[37] It comes down to a few statements.

- **Positive, with conditions.** "AI can reduce waste, accelerate learning, and improve decision-making. However, if we do not frame it ethically, it amplifies dysfunction: overload, superficiality, and disconnection."
- **Leadership before software.** "AI requires a leadership upgrade, not a software upgrade."
- **The human in the loop.** "Humans must remain in the loop wherever ethics, dignity, long-term impact, or power are involved." And again: "AI can inform decisions, but it must not replace decision-making."
- **Intention before the tool.** The first duty of leaders: "Define intention before tools — Why are we using AI? What human outcome are we serving?"
- **Explainability.** "If a system cannot be explained, it cannot be trusted."
- **Consciousness.** "The fundamental question is not 'How powerful will AI become?' but 'How conscious will we be in using it?'" For "if we do not evolve, we will create faster systems and emptier humans."

These positions extend axis A of the SALTER guide: against the fracture of **Artificiality**, the lever is **Embodied Presence**, that is, "the conscious rebalancing between artificial intelligence and human presence."[38]

What Is Still Missing

The existing frameworks converge: dignity, transparency, fairness, accountability, safety, privacy. Yet they have three blind spots. They are addressed mainly to states and major developers, rarely to the small business, the teacher, or the parent. They describe requirements, rarely a dynamic of continuous adjustment. And they have little to say about **measure**: a use can be excessive even if it is legal, transparent, and nondiscriminatory. This is where Equiconscism can make a contribution of its own.

13.5 AI Through the Lens of the Ten Key Questions

The ten key questions (see chapter 8) turn broad principles into questions that a team can ask itself in an hour.

Key Question	Applied to an AI Project
1. Meaning and Purpose	What real human need does this system serve? What would we lose by not using it—and by using it?

Key Question	Applied to an AI Project
2. Inner / Outer Balance	Does it lighten our load or saturate us? Does it preserve time for reflection, rest, and relationships?
3. Overall Impact	What are its ecological (energy, water, hardware), social, economic, and cultural effects in the short, medium, and long term?
4. Inclusion and Listening	Who will be judged, ranked, or excluded by this system? Have the people concerned been consulted?
5. Shared Responsibility	Who, by name, answers for errors? Is there a means of redress?
6. Timing and Cycles	Does the pace of adoption leave time to learn, test, and correct?
7. Power and Consent	Who decided to introduce it? Have the people concerned consented? Does it create dependence on a supplier?
8. Regenerative Innovation	Does it help skills, relationships, and resources grow—or does it deplete them?
9. Legacy and Example	Which human skills are we still passing on? Do leaders themselves apply the rules they have set?
10. Joy and Vitality	Does this system make work and life more alive, or merely faster?

The Ten-Question Scorecard of chapter 8 (1 = needs strengthening / absent; 5 = fully integrated) makes it possible to score a project; an average of 3 or below (the "alert" and "transition" zones) is a signal to review it before deployment.

13.6 The Ten Commandments of Equiconscist AI

Why "Commandments"?

The word is a deliberate nod to the Decalogue, the "Ten Words" of Exodus (20:1–17) and Deuteronomy (5:6–21).[39] This is not a religious text. The form was chosen for its brevity, its solemnity—what is at stake touches on human dignity and the living world—and its operational character: each commandment translates into verifiable actions.

What Already Exists—and What Sets This Proposal Apart

Others have used this form. On February 27, 2018, at a Westminster eForum seminar, Steven Croft, Bishop of Oxford and a member of the House of Lords Select Committee on Artificial Intelligence, proposed "ten commandments" for AI: the benefit of all, transparency and fairness, respect for data, reduction of inequality, protection of democracy and truth, augmentation rather than replacement of human work, education for all, ethical scrutiny, refusal of the autonomous power to destroy, and priority for the most urgent problems.[40] In Quebec, the government's 2024 statement of principles for the responsible use of AI by public bodies, which comprises ten principles, was discussed under the title "Les dix commandements de l'IA" (the ten commandments of AI).[41] Other lists circulate online.

The proposal that follows acknowledges these contributions; the overlaps, notably with the Bishop of Oxford's list, are welcome. It differs from them on four points:

1. **It is addressed to humans, not to machines.** An AI has no moral conscience; it can neither obey a commandment nor answer for one. The "you" refers to every person who designs, deploys, directs, or uses an AI system.
2. **It incorporates measure**: the seventh commandment applies the corridor of right measure to AI.
3. **It includes the non-human living world and future generations** (widening the gaze).
4. **It is linked to a method**: each commandment refers to the ten key questions and to the cycle of conscious balance (Perceive, Listen, Discern, Adjust, Answer and Pass On), and is spelled out for designers, leaders, and users.

I. You shall put AI at the service of human dignity and the living world, never the reverse.

Meaning. AI is a means. As soon as a person becomes a variable to be optimized or a cost to be cut, the order is inverted. This commandment sets the purpose; all the others flow from it.

Grounds. Human dignity is the foundation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), of the Council of Europe Convention, and of *Magnifica Humanitas*; the OECD puts well-being and sustainable development first, and UNESCO adds ecosystems.[42] [43] Equiconscism extends this requirement to all three dimensions: a measured and shared economy, an inclusive society built on solidarity, and a respected and regenerated living world.

Implementation. *Designers*: before any development, set down in writing the human need served and the people who could be harmed. *Leaders*: define the intention before the tools; reject projects whose sole objective is to cut headcount with no plan for the people concerned. *Users*: ask yourself whether the tool serves what matters or only what is pressing.

Link. Question 1, *Meaning and Purpose*, and question 3, *Overall Impact*.

II. You shall keep decisions and responsibility in human hands—identifiable and accountable.

Meaning. AI can propose, simulate, forecast. It cannot answer for its actions. Every decision that affects a life, a career, a freedom, or a right must be traceable to a person who answers for it—by name, not by procedure.

Grounds. Asilomar states that humans should choose how and whether to delegate decisions;[44] the EU AI Act requires effective human oversight of high-risk systems; the encyclical calls for responsibility clearly defined at every stage, with "the possibility of identifying who must 'account' for decisions, justify them, monitor them, and, when necessary, challenge them and remedy any harm caused" (no. 105).[45]

Implementation. *Designers*: build in, technically, human intervention and the ability to contest and correct. *Leaders*: establish in writing three decision zones—what is automated, what is augmented, what remains reserved for humans—and designate one responsible person for each system. The higher the stakes, the greater the human share must be. *Users*: never invoke "the model said so" to evade a decision.

Link. Question 5, *Shared Responsibility*, and question 7, *Power and Consent*. This is the principle of embraced responsibility (the seventh principle of Equiconscism) applied to the machine.

III. You shall tell the truth about the machine: what it is, what it does, what it does not know.

Meaning. Everyone has the right to know whether they are talking to a person or to a program, whether an image is real or generated, and why a decision concerning them was made. An AI that imitates a human without saying so lies by omission.

Grounds. Transparency and explainability appear in every framework: the OECD, UNESCO, the *Rome Call*, the EU AI Act (disclosure obligations for generated content since August 2026).[46] The decline in the transparency of the major developers in 2025 shows that nothing is guaranteed.[47]

Implementation. *Designers*: document training data, limitations, and known error rates; clearly label generated content. *Leaders*: keep a register of the systems in use, with their purpose, their data, their limitations, and the person responsible, as the SALTER guide recommends;[48] inform employees and customers. *Users*: disclose the use of generative tools when it is significant, check sources, and never present as one's own what a machine has produced.

Link. Question 5, *Shared Responsibility*, and question 9, *Legacy and Example*.

IV. You shall manipulate neither minds nor emotions; you shall protect attention.

Meaning. Attention is the raw material of consciousness. An AI designed to capture people's mental bandwidth, exploit fears, flatter biases, or simulate affection targets consciousness itself. It directly contradicts Equiconscism, which rests on the capacity to see clearly.

Grounds. Herbert Simon foresaw it as early as 1971: a wealth of information creates a poverty of attention.[49] The EU AI Act prohibits subliminal techniques and the exploitation of vulnerabilities; the encyclical warns that "When words are simulated, they do not build genuine relationships, but only their appearance" (no. 100).[50] Da Empoli shows how the harnessing of anger feeds polarization.[51]

Implementation. *Designers*: ban addictive mechanisms, false senses of urgency, and artificial companions that pass themselves off as people; measure users' well-being, not just their engagement time. *Leaders*: never use AI to target the weaknesses of customers or voters; renounce deepfakes in writing. *Users*: protect screen-free time, especially for children; learn, as the encyclical urges, "how to exercise restraint in the use of AI" (no. 140).[52]

Link. Question 2, *Inner / Outer Balance*, and the SALTER lever of *Embodied Presence*.

V. You shall respect the privacy and consent of every person.

Meaning. Personal data are fragments of lives. Exploiting them without informed consent means treating people as deposits to be mined.

Grounds. The right to privacy is guaranteed by Article 12 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights; it is implemented in Europe by the GDPR and, in Switzerland, by the revised Federal Act on Data Protection (FADP), in force since September 1, 2023. The encyclical counts "algorithms" and "data" among the "new forms of property" that fall under the universal destination of goods (no. 67).[53]

Implementation. *Designers*: minimize the data collected and anonymize it; provide for consent that is readable and revocable; do not train models on data obtained without the right to do so. *Leaders*: prohibit algorithmic surveillance of employees beyond what is strictly necessary; never introduce emotion recognition in the workplace. *Users*: do not entrust confidential data—your own or anyone else's—to a public tool.

Link. Question 7, *Power and Consent*. Consent is not a checked box: it is a free, informed, and revocable decision.

VI. You shall make AI fair: you shall track down its biases and serve the most vulnerable first.

Meaning. An AI is never fairer than the data it learns from and the people who design it. Without active vigilance, it reproduces and amplifies discrimination. Differentiated equity (see chapter 7) asks for more: paying particular attention to those whom the system is most likely to harm.

Grounds. The work of Buolamwini and Gebru documented disparities in error rates by gender and skin color.[54] Inclusion and impartiality appear in the *Rome Call*; nondiscrimination, in the EU AI Act and the Council of Europe Convention.

Implementation. *Designers*: test systems on diverse populations, publish performance gaps, involve the people concerned in testing. *Leaders*: carry out a fundamental rights impact assessment before any use affecting employment, credit, housing, education, or social assistance; provide for fast and free recourse to a human. *Users*: report discriminatory results.

Link. Question 4, *Inclusion and Listening*: "Who has not yet been heard or taken into account, and how can we give them a voice that truly influences the decision?"

VII. You shall use AI with measure: sparing with energy and resources, proportionate to its usefulness.

Meaning. This is the commandment most specific to Equiconscism. Not everything that is possible is useful; not everything that is useful justifies any cost. The corridor of right measure applies: a **floor** (AI is useful when it serves a real need that other means serve less well) and a **ceiling** (beyond which its consumption of energy, water, materials, and attention exceeds what it contributes).

Grounds. The IEA's projections (see 13.1) show that the growth of AI is putting pressure on power systems and the climate.[55] The encyclical recalls the energy and water footprint of AI (no. 101) and warns that "even unchecked growth can give rise to impoverishment" (no. 113; see chapter 7).[56]

Implementation. *Designers*: favor the smallest models sufficient for the task, optimize efficiency, publish energy consumption. *Leaders*: include the footprint of AI in the organization's environmental assessment; choose data centers powered by renewable energy; do not automate by default. *Users*: do not call on a generative AI for what a simple search, a calculation, or a conversation can resolve just as well.

Link. Question 3, *Overall Impact*, and question 8, *Regenerative Innovation*; the dimension "a respected and regenerated living world." This is the second principle of Equiconscism: right measure rather than the maximum.

VIII. You shall make human capacities grow instead of letting them wither: thinking, learning, creating, connecting.

Meaning. An AI that thinks in our place can make us faster and less capable. The goal is augmentation, not substitution: that each person should come away from using AI more competent, more autonomous, and better connected to others.

Grounds. The cognitive debt observed by Kosmyna et al., automation bias, and the ironies of automation all point the same way.[57] [58] The Bishop of Oxford was already asking that AI augment human work and creativity rather than replace them.[59]

Implementation. *Designers*: design tools that explain, question, and invite verification, rather than delivering closed answers. *Leaders*: make AI training a continuous process, deliberately preserve spaces for decision-making without technological mediation, and maintain the skills needed to take back control. *Users*: think first, call on AI afterward; at school, make the limits of AI a subject of learning.

Link. Question 8, *Regenerative Innovation* (regenerating human and natural resources), question 9, *Legacy and Example*, and question 10, *Joy and Vitality*: creating and connecting nourish the élan of life, whereas delegation alone produces nothing but performance.

IX. You shall share the power and the value that AI creates: no monopoly, no dependency, but a common good.

Meaning. AI is built on a common heritage: centuries of knowledge, billions of texts and images, research often funded by public money. The value it creates cannot legitimately be captured by a few, nor can its power escape democratic control.

Grounds. The concentration documented by the *AI Index* (see 13.1); the encyclical's warning against a morality "determined by a few" (no. 107); the call of the Paris summit to avoid market concentration;[60] the universal destination of goods and the principle of subsidiarity. Ravi Chaudhry's Peopleism, which places people and nature above capital, sheds light on what is at stake at the macro level (see chapter 5).

Implementation. *Designers*: contribute to open models, data, and tools when safety allows; pay fairly for annotation and moderation work. *Leaders*: avoid lock-in with a single supplier; share productivity gains with employees (time, training, pay). *Public authorities*: support public infrastructure; enforce competition law. *Users*: at equal quality, favor open, local, or cooperative solutions.

Link. Question 7, *Power and Consent*, and the dimension "a measured and shared economy."

X. You shall keep your hand on the off switch: safety, human control, vigilance in the face of risk, and the service of peace.

Meaning. A technology that can no longer be stopped is no longer a tool. Every system must be able to be suspended, corrected, or withdrawn, under oversight commensurate with its risks. Never must a machine alone hold the power to kill.

Grounds. Asilomar calls for avoiding an arms race in lethal autonomous weapons;[61] the Bishop of Oxford insists that "the autonomous power to hurt or destroy" never be vested in AI.[62] The encyclical affirms that "No algorithm can make war morally acceptable" (no. 198) and argues for a politics capable of slowing down (no. 107).[63]

Implementation. *Designers*: build in shutdown mechanisms, independent safety testing, and the reporting of serious incidents. *Leaders*: set an explicit stop criterion for each system, as SALTER recommends for every measure.[64] *Governments*: support international agreements on autonomous weapons and on the safety of advanced systems. *Users*: report abnormal behavior.

Link. Question 6, *Timing and Cycles* (knowing how to slow down), and question 5, *Shared Responsibility*.

FOCUS **The Ten Commandments of Equiconscist AI**

They are addressed not to the machine, which has no moral conscience, but to every person who designs, directs, deploys, or uses an artificial intelligence system.

I. You shall put AI at the service of human dignity and the living world, never the reverse. **II.** You shall keep decisions and responsibility in human hands—identifiable and accountable. **III.** You shall tell the truth about the machine: what it is, what it does, what it does not know. **IV.** You shall manipulate neither minds nor emotions; you shall protect attention. **V.** You shall respect the privacy and consent of every person. **VI.** You shall make AI fair: you shall track down its biases and serve the most vulnerable first. **VII.** You shall use AI with measure: sparing with energy and resources, proportionate to its usefulness. **VIII.** You shall make human capacities grow instead of letting them wither: thinking, learning, creating, connecting. **IX.** You shall share the power and the value that AI creates: no monopoly, no dependency, but a common good. **X.** You shall keep your hand on the off switch: safety, human control, vigilance in the face of risk, and the service of peace.

13.7 Putting Them into Practice: A Person, an Organization, a State

The commandments are only as good as their practice. The cycle of conscious balance (see chapter 7) provides the method, at every level.

IN PRACTICE **For a Person**

- **Perceive**: for one week, take an inventory of your uses of AI.
- **Listen**: notice what they do to your concentration, your memory, your relationships.
- **Discern**: distinguish what you are happy to delegate (formatting, translation) from what you want to do yourself (thinking, deciding, comforting).
- **Adjust**: set a few simple rules—think first, always verify, one AI-free day a week.
- **Answer and Pass On**: talk about it with your children, your colleagues, those close to you; lead by example.

IN PRACTICE **For an Organization**

- Formulate the intention, keep a register of systems, and define in writing the three decision zones (automated, augmented, reserved for humans).
- Assess each project using the ten key questions, involving the people concerned.
- Train continuously; measure the effects (quality of decisions, workload, skills, energy, incidents).
- Set a success criterion and a stop criterion for each system; review everything every six to twelve months, in conjunction with the SALTER diagnosis (the *Saturation* and *Artificiality* axes).

IN PRACTICE **For a Municipality, a Region, a State**

- Guarantee shared **floors**: transparency of automated administrative decisions, the right to an explanation and to human recourse, data protection.
- Organize **subsidiarity**: let sectors, municipalities, and organizations adapt the rules to their contexts, subject to these floors.
- Invest in **digital commons** and in training for the whole population; include the footprint of AI in energy planning.
- Involve citizens in structural choices; cooperate internationally on the risks that no state can handle alone.

AI will not spare us the need to become more conscious; it compels us to. If our consciousness grows at the same pace, AI can free up time for what David Fiorucci calls "what really matters: attention, creativity, and meaningful contribution."[65] The choice does not belong to the machine. It belongs to us.

In Brief

- AI is spreading at unprecedented speed (88% of organizations in 2025), with massive investment, strong concentration, and a growing energy footprint.
- It is a **multiplier**: it amplifies clarity or confusion, fairness or bias, sufficiency or waste. Used and governed well, it becomes an ideal support for, and multiplier of, conscious balance.
- The existing frameworks (OECD, UNESCO, the EU AI Act as amended in 2026, the Council of Europe Convention, the Swiss sector-specific approach, and others) converge, but say little about measure and speak little to everyday actors.
- *Magnifica Humanitas* echoes several of Equiconscism's criteria, notably the warning against technical power "left unbalanced" (no. 113); David Fiorucci insists on intention before the tool and on "a leadership upgrade, not a software upgrade."
- The **Ten Commandments of Equiconscist AI** are addressed to humans, not to machines; they incorporate right measure, the living world, and future generations, and refer to the ten key questions.
- Putting them into practice follows the cycle of conscious balance, from the person to the state, with one simple rule: the higher the stakes, the greater human responsibility must be.

Web pages accessed September 30, 2026.

Notes

1. Melvin Kranzberg, "Technology and History: 'Kranzberg's Laws,'" *Technology and Culture* 27, no. 3 (1986): pp. 544–560.
2. Leo XIV, Encyclical Letter *Magnifica Humanitas* (May 15, 2026), no. 126, accessed October 16, 2026, https://www.vatican.va/content/leo-xiv/en/encyclicals/documents/20260515-magnifica-humanitas.html.
3. Stanford Institute for Human-Centered Artificial Intelligence (HAI), *The 2025 AI Index Report*, April 2025, https://hai.stanford.edu/ai-index/2025-ai-index-report.
4. Stanford HAI, *AI Index Report 2026*, chapter 4, "Economy," April 2026, https://hai.stanford.edu/assets/files/ai_index_report_2026_chapter_4_economy.pdf. The data on employment of young developers draw on the work of Erik Brynjolfsson and his coauthors (Stanford Digital Economy Lab, 2025).
5. Stanford HAI, *AI Index Report 2026*, published April 13, 2026, https://hai.stanford.edu/ai-index/2026-ai-index-report, especially chapter 1, "Research and Development" (notable models, computing capacity, estimated training emissions of Grok 4: 72,816 t CO_2e), https://hai.stanford.edu/assets/files/ai_index_report_2026_chapter_1_research_development.pdf; chapter 6, "Medicine" (fig. 6.1.2: publications on AI for drug discovery); and chapter 9, "Public Opinion" (Ipsos surveys); summarized in "Stanford's AI Index for 2026 Shows the State of AI," *IEEE Spectrum*, April 2026, https://spectrum.ieee.org/state-of-ai-index-2026.
6. Stanford Institute for Human-Centered Artificial Intelligence (HAI), *The 2025 AI Index Report*, April 2025, https://hai.stanford.edu/ai-index/2025-ai-index-report.
7. Stanford HAI, *AI Index Report 2026*, published April 13, 2026, https://hai.stanford.edu/ai-index/2026-ai-index-report, especially chapter 1, "Research and Development" (notable models, computing capacity, estimated training emissions of Grok 4: 72,816 t CO_2e), https://hai.stanford.edu/assets/files/ai_index_report_2026_chapter_1_research_development.pdf; chapter 6, "Medicine" (fig. 6.1.2: publications on AI for drug discovery); and chapter 9, "Public Opinion" (Ipsos surveys); summarized in "Stanford's AI Index for 2026 Shows the State of AI," *IEEE Spectrum*, April 2026, https://spectrum.ieee.org/state-of-ai-index-2026.
8. Stanford HAI, *AI Index Report 2026*, chapter 4, "Economy," April 2026, https://hai.stanford.edu/assets/files/ai_index_report_2026_chapter_4_economy.pdf. The data on employment of young developers draw on the work of Erik Brynjolfsson and his coauthors (Stanford Digital Economy Lab, 2025).
9. Stanford HAI, *AI Index Report 2026*, published April 13, 2026, https://hai.stanford.edu/ai-index/2026-ai-index-report, especially chapter 1, "Research and Development" (notable models, computing capacity, estimated training emissions of Grok 4: 72,816 t CO_2e), https://hai.stanford.edu/assets/files/ai_index_report_2026_chapter_1_research_development.pdf; chapter 6, "Medicine" (fig. 6.1.2: publications on AI for drug discovery); and chapter 9, "Public Opinion" (Ipsos surveys); summarized in "Stanford's AI Index for 2026 Shows the State of AI," *IEEE Spectrum*, April 2026, https://spectrum.ieee.org/state-of-ai-index-2026.
10. Stanford HAI, *AI Index Report 2026*, published April 13, 2026, https://hai.stanford.edu/ai-index/2026-ai-index-report, especially chapter 1, "Research and Development" (notable models, computing capacity, estimated training emissions of Grok 4: 72,816 t CO_2e), https://hai.stanford.edu/assets/files/ai_index_report_2026_chapter_1_research_development.pdf; chapter 6, "Medicine" (fig. 6.1.2: publications on AI for drug discovery); and chapter 9, "Public Opinion" (Ipsos surveys); summarized in "Stanford's AI Index for 2026 Shows the State of AI," *IEEE Spectrum*, April 2026, https://spectrum.ieee.org/state-of-ai-index-2026.
11. International Energy Agency (IEA), *Energy and AI* (Paris: IEA, April 2025), executive summary, https://www.iea.org/reports/energy-and-ai/executive-summary.
12. Stanford HAI, *AI Index Report 2026*, published April 13, 2026, https://hai.stanford.edu/ai-index/2026-ai-index-report, especially chapter 1, "Research and Development" (notable models, computing capacity, estimated training emissions of Grok 4: 72,816 t CO_2e), https://hai.stanford.edu/assets/files/ai_index_report_2026_chapter_1_research_development.pdf; chapter 6, "Medicine" (fig. 6.1.2: publications on AI for drug discovery); and chapter 9, "Public Opinion" (Ipsos surveys); summarized in "Stanford's AI Index for 2026 Shows the State of AI," *IEEE Spectrum*, April 2026, https://spectrum.ieee.org/state-of-ai-index-2026.
13. Paweł Gmyrek et al., *Generative AI and Jobs: A Refined Global Index of Occupational Exposure*, ILO Working Paper (Geneva: ILO / NASK, May 2025); UN News, "AI threatens one in four jobs," May 20, 2025, https://news.un.org/en/story/2025/05/1163486.
14. OECD, *Perspectives de l'emploi de l'OCDE 2023: intelligence artificielle et marché du travail* (Paris: Éditions OCDE, 2023), https://doi.org/10.1787/aae5dba0-fr (French edition; published in English as *OECD Employment Outlook 2023: Artificial Intelligence and the Labour Market*).
15. Stanford HAI, *AI Index Report 2026*, chapter 4, "Economy," April 2026, https://hai.stanford.edu/assets/files/ai_index_report_2026_chapter_4_economy.pdf. The data on employment of young developers draw on the work of Erik Brynjolfsson and his coauthors (Stanford Digital Economy Lab, 2025).
16. Stanford HAI, *AI Index Report 2026*, published April 13, 2026, https://hai.stanford.edu/ai-index/2026-ai-index-report, especially chapter 1, "Research and Development" (notable models, computing capacity, estimated training emissions of Grok 4: 72,816 t CO_2e), https://hai.stanford.edu/assets/files/ai_index_report_2026_chapter_1_research_development.pdf; chapter 6, "Medicine" (fig. 6.1.2: publications on AI for drug discovery); and chapter 9, "Public Opinion" (Ipsos surveys); summarized in "Stanford's AI Index for 2026 Shows the State of AI," *IEEE Spectrum*, April 2026, https://spectrum.ieee.org/state-of-ai-index-2026.

17. Stanford HAI, *AI Index Report 2026*, chapter 3, "Responsible AI," https://hai.stanford.edu/assets/files/ai_index_report_2026_chapter_3_responsible_ai.pdf.
18. Stanford Institute for Human-Centered Artificial Intelligence (HAI), *The 2025 AI Index Report*, April 2025, https://hai.stanford.edu/ai-index/2025-ai-index-report.
19. Stanford HAI, *AI Index Report 2026*, published April 13, 2026, https://hai.stanford.edu/ai-index/2026-ai-index-report, especially chapter 1, "Research and Development" (notable models, computing capacity, estimated training emissions of Grok 4: 72,816 t CO_2e), https://hai.stanford.edu/assets/files/ai_index_report_2026_chapter_1_research_development.pdf; chapter 6, "Medicine" (fig. 6.1.2: publications on AI for drug discovery); and chapter 9, "Public Opinion" (Ipsos surveys); summarized in "Stanford's AI Index for 2026 Shows the State of AI," *IEEE Spectrum*, April 2026, https://spectrum.ieee.org/state-of-ai-index-2026.
20. David Fiorucci, "IA et leadership: pourquoi la vraie mise à niveau est humaine, pas technologique," LP3 AG / SA, Biel/Bienne, March 28, 2026, p. 2.
21. Giuliano da Empoli, *Les ingénieurs du chaos* (Paris: JC Lattès, 2019); *L'heure des prédateurs* (Paris: Gallimard, 2025).
22. Nataliya Kosmyna et al., "Your Brain on ChatGPT: Accumulation of Cognitive Debt when Using an AI Assistant for Essay Writing Task," preprint, arXiv:2506.08872, MIT Media Lab, June 2025 (revised December 2025).
23. Lisanne Bainbridge, "Ironies of Automation," *Automatica* 19, no. 6 (1983): pp. 775–779; Raja Parasuraman and Victor Riley, "Humans and Automation: Use, Misuse, Disuse, Abuse," *Human Factors* 39, no. 2 (1997): pp. 230–253.
24. Joy Buolamwini and Timnit Gebru, "Gender Shades: Intersectional Accuracy Disparities in Commercial Gender Classification," *Proceedings of Machine Learning Research* 81 (2018): pp. 77–91.
25. David Fiorucci, SALTER® — *La boussole consciente pour un monde en mutation* (Biel/Bienne: LP3 AG / SA, 2026), chap. 6, "A — Artificialité: la fracture invisible de l'économie augmentée," pp. 21–24 (quotations on pp. 22 and 23); chap. 16, "Le guide de mise en œuvre: six étapes," p. 62 (stop criterion for each measure); chap. 17, "Catalogue de mesures par public cible," p. 65 (register of AI systems).
26. Future of Life Institute, *Asilomar AI Principles*, Beneficial AI conference, Asilomar, California, January 2017, principles 1, 16, and 18, https://futureoflife.org/open-letter/ai-principles/.
27. OECD, *Recommendation of the Council on Artificial Intelligence*, OECD/LEGAL/0449, adopted May 22, 2019, revised May 2024, https://oecd.ai/en/ai-principles.
28. UNESCO, *Recommendation on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence*, adopted by the General Conference on November 23, 2021, https://www.unesco.org/fr/artificial-intelligence/recommendation-ethics (value "Environment and ecosystem flourishing").
29. *Rome Call for AI Ethics*, Rome, February 28, 2020, https://www.romecall.org/the-call/.
30. Regulation (EU) 2024/1689 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 June 2024 laying down harmonised rules on artificial intelligence, OJ L, July 12, 2024, arts. 4, 5, 14, 50, and 113.
31. Regulation (EU) 2026/1744 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 8 July 2026 amending Regulations (EU) 2024/1689, (EU) 2018/1139, and (EU) 2023/1230 ("digital omnibus on AI"), OJ L, July 24, 2026, in force July 27, 2026 (AI literacy, art. 4; new prohibitions, art. 5(1); four-month transitional period for the marking provided for in art. 50(2)), https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg/2026/1744/oj; see also White & Case, "EU AI Omnibus enters into force, amending the AI Act," July 2026.
32. Council of Europe, CETS No. 225, Vilnius, September 5, 2024; status of signatures and ratifications: Council of Europe, "The Framework Convention on Artificial Intelligence," https://www.coe.int/en/web/artificial-intelligence/the-framework-convention-on-artificial-intelligence (21 signatories, including 15 member states; the European Union the only Party); Council of Europe, "European Union ratifies the Council of Europe Framework Convention on Artificial Intelligence," May 15, 2026, https://www.coe.int/en/web/artificial-intelligence.
33. G7, *Hiroshima Process International Guiding Principles for Advanced AI Systems* and *International Code of Conduct for Organizations Developing Advanced AI Systems*, October 30, 2023.
34. *The Bletchley Declaration*, November 1, 2023; *Seoul Declaration*, May 21, 2024; *Statement on Inclusive and Sustainable Artificial Intelligence for People and the Planet*, Paris, February 11, 2025; *AI Impact Summit*, New Delhi, February 2026, https://impact.indiaai.gov.in/.
35. Federal Council, press releases of February 12, 2025 (https://www.admin.ch/en/nsb?id=104110) and March 2025 (https://www.admin.ch/en/nsb?id=104646); Federal Office of Communications (OFCOM), "Artificial Intelligence," https://www.bakom.admin.ch/en/artificial-intelligence.
36. Leo XIV, Encyclical Letter *Magnifica Humanitas* (May 15, 2026), nos. 67, 99, 100, 104, 105, 106, 107, 110, 113, 140, 173, 198, accessed October 16, 2026, https://www.vatican.va/content/leo-xiv/en/encyclicals/documents/20260515-magnifica-humanitas.html.
37. David Fiorucci, "AI and Leadership: Why the Real Upgrade Is Human, Not Technological," LP3 AG / SA, March 28, 2026, pp. 2–4 (interview conducted by Dave Drodge for his forthcoming book *AI, You, and the Future of Work*; English original; also published in French as "IA et leadership: pourquoi la vraie mise à niveau est humaine, pas technologique").
38. David Fiorucci, SALTER® — *La boussole consciente pour un monde en mutation* (Biel/Bienne: LP3 AG / SA, 2026), chap. 6, "A — Artificialité: la fracture invisible de l'économie augmentée," pp. 21–24 (quotations on pp. 22 and 23); chap. 16, "Le guide de mise en œuvre: six étapes," p. 62 (stop criterion for each measure); chap. 17, "Catalogue de mesures par public cible," p. 65 (register of AI systems).
39. Exodus 20:1–17; Deuteronomy 5:6–21. The term "Decalogue" comes from the Greek *deka logoi*, "ten words."

40. Steven Croft, Bishop of Oxford, address to the Westminster eForum seminar "Artificial Intelligence and Robotics: Innovation, Funding and Policy Priorities," London, February 27, 2018; report: "Senior clergyman proposes ten commandments of AI," *Internet of Business*, 2018, https://internetofbusiness.com/senior-clergyman-proposes-ten-commandments-i/; text of the ten points reproduced by Richard Murphy, "The Ten Commandments of AI," *Tax Research UK*, March 5, 2018, https://www.taxresearch.org.uk/Blog/2018/03/05/the-ten-commandments-of-ai/.
41. Stéphanie Toner, "Les dix commandements de l'IA," Édilex blog, October 2, 2024, https://edilex.com/blog/2024/10/02/les-dix-commandements-de-lia/, commenting on the Quebec government's statement of principles for the responsible use of AI by public bodies (2024).
42. OECD, *Recommendation of the Council on Artificial Intelligence*, OECD/LEGAL/0449, adopted May 22, 2019, revised May 2024, https://oecd.ai/en/ai-principles.
43. UNESCO, *Recommendation on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence*, adopted by the General Conference on November 23, 2021, https://www.unesco.org/fr/artificial-intelligence/recommendation-ethics (value "Environment and ecosystem flourishing").
44. Future of Life Institute, *Asilomar AI Principles*, Beneficial AI conference, Asilomar, California, January 2017, principles 1, 16, and 18, https://futureoflife.org/open-letter/ai-principles/.
45. Leo XIV, Encyclical Letter *Magnifica Humanitas* (May 15, 2026), nos. 67, 99, 100, 104, 105, 106, 107, 110, 113, 140, 173, 198, accessed October 16, 2026, https://www.vatican.va/content/leo-xiv/en/encyclicals/documents/20260515-magnifica-humanitas.html.
46. Regulation (EU) 2024/1689 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 June 2024 laying down harmonised rules on artificial intelligence, OJ L, July 12, 2024, arts. 4, 5, 14, 50, and 113.
47. Stanford HAI, *AI Index Report 2026*, chapter 3, "Responsible AI," https://hai.stanford.edu/assets/files/ai_index_report_2026_chapter_3_responsible_ai.pdf.
48. David Fiorucci, *SALTER® — La boussole consciente pour un monde en mutation* (Biel/Bienne: LP3 AG / SA, 2026), chap. 6, "A — Artificialité: la fracture invisible de l'économie augmentée," pp. 21–24 (quotations on pp. 22 and 23); chap. 16, "Le guide de mise en œuvre: six étapes," p. 62 (stop criterion for each measure); chap. 17, "Catalogue de mesures par public cible," p. 65 (register of AI systems).
49. Herbert A. Simon, "Designing Organizations for an Information-Rich World," in Martin Greenberger, ed., *Computers, Communications, and the Public Interest* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1971), pp. 40–41.
50. Leo XIV, Encyclical Letter *Magnifica Humanitas* (May 15, 2026), nos. 67, 99, 100, 104, 105, 106, 107, 110, 113, 140, 173, 198, accessed October 16, 2026, https://www.vatican.va/content/leo-xiv/en/encyclicals/documents/20260515-magnifica-humanitas.html.
51. Giuliano da Empoli, *Les ingénieurs du chaos* (Paris: JC Lattès, 2019); *L'heure des prédateurs* (Paris: Gallimard, 2025).
52. Leo XIV, Encyclical Letter *Magnifica Humanitas* (May 15, 2026), nos. 67, 99, 100, 104, 105, 106, 107, 110, 113, 140, 173, 198, accessed October 16, 2026, https://www.vatican.va/content/leo-xiv/en/encyclicals/documents/20260515-magnifica-humanitas.html.
53. Leo XIV, Encyclical Letter *Magnifica Humanitas* (May 15, 2026), nos. 67, 99, 100, 104, 105, 106, 107, 110, 113, 140, 173, 198, accessed October 16, 2026, https://www.vatican.va/content/leo-xiv/en/encyclicals/documents/20260515-magnifica-humanitas.html.
54. Joy Buolamwini and Timnit Gebru, "Gender Shades: Intersectional Accuracy Disparities in Commercial Gender Classification," *Proceedings of Machine Learning Research* 81 (2018): pp. 77–91.
55. International Energy Agency (IEA), *Energy and AI* (Paris: IEA, April 2025), executive summary, https://www.iea.org/reports/energy-and-ai/executive-summary.
56. Leo XIV, Encyclical Letter *Magnifica Humanitas* (May 15, 2026), nos. 67, 99, 100, 104, 105, 106, 107, 110, 113, 140, 173, 198, accessed October 16, 2026, https://www.vatican.va/content/leo-xiv/en/encyclicals/documents/20260515-magnifica-humanitas.html.
57. Nataliya Kosmyna et al., "Your Brain on ChatGPT: Accumulation of Cognitive Debt when Using an AI Assistant for Essay Writing Task," preprint, arXiv:2506.08872, MIT Media Lab, June 2025 (revised December 2025).
58. Lisanne Bainbridge, "Ironies of Automation," *Automatica* 19, no. 6 (1983): pp. 775–779; Raja Parasuraman and Victor Riley, "Humans and Automation: Use, Misuse, Disuse, Abuse," *Human Factors* 39, no. 2 (1997): pp. 230–253.
59. Steven Croft, Bishop of Oxford, address to the Westminster eForum seminar "Artificial Intelligence and Robotics: Innovation, Funding and Policy Priorities," London, February 27, 2018; report: "Senior clergyman proposes ten commandments of AI," *Internet of Business*, 2018, https://internetofbusiness.com/senior-clergyman-proposes-ten-commandments-i/; text of the ten points reproduced by Richard Murphy, "The Ten Commandments of AI," *Tax Research UK*, March 5, 2018, https://www.taxresearch.org.uk/Blog/2018/03/05/the-ten-commandments-of-ai/.
60. *The Bletchley Declaration*, November 1, 2023; *Seoul Declaration*, May 21, 2024; *Statement on Inclusive and Sustainable Artificial Intelligence for People and the Planet*, Paris, February 11, 2025; *AI Impact Summit*, New Delhi, February 2026, https://impact.indiaai.gov.in/.
61. Future of Life Institute, *Asilomar AI Principles*, Beneficial AI conference, Asilomar, California, January 2017, principles 1, 16, and 18, https://futureoflife.org/open-letter/ai-principles/.
62. Steven Croft, Bishop of Oxford, address to the Westminster eForum seminar "Artificial Intelligence and Robotics: Innovation, Funding and Policy Priorities," London, February 27, 2018; report: "Senior clergyman proposes ten commandments of AI," *Internet of Business*, 2018, https://internetofbusiness.com/senior-clergyman-proposes-ten-commandments-i/; text of the ten points reproduced by Richard Murphy, "The Ten Commandments of AI," *Tax Research UK*, March 5, 2018, https://www.taxresearch.org.uk/Blog/2018/03/05/the-ten-commandments-of-ai/.
63. Leo XIV, Encyclical Letter *Magnifica Humanitas* (May 15, 2026), nos. 67, 99, 100, 104, 105, 106, 107, 110, 113, 140, 173, 198, accessed October 16, 2026, https://www.vatican.va/content/leo-xiv/en/encyclicals/documents/20260515-magnifica-humanitas.html.

64. David Fiorucci, SALTER® — *La boussole consciente pour un monde en mutation* (Biel/Bienne: LP3 AG / SA, 2026), chap. 6, "A — Artificialité: la fracture invisible de l'économie augmentée," pp. 21–24 (quotations on pp. 22 and 23); chap. 16, "Le guide de mise en œuvre: six étapes," p. 62 (stop criterion for each measure); chap. 17, "Catalogue de mesures par public cible," p. 65 (register of AI systems).
65. David Fiorucci, "AI and Leadership: Why the Real Upgrade Is Human, Not Technological," LP3 AG / SA, March 28, 2026, pp. 2–4 (interview conducted by Dave Drodge for his forthcoming book *AI, You, and the Future of Work*; English original; also published in French as "IA et leadership: pourquoi la vraie mise à niveau est humaine, pas technologique").

PART VI

Taking Action

Putting it into practice. Giving an account.

CHAPTER 14

Putting Equiconscism into Practice

> *"The civilization of love will not arise from a single or spectacular gesture, but from the sum total of small and steadfast acts of fidelity that serve as a bulwark against dehumanization."*
>
> — Leo XIV, *Magnifica Humanitas*, no. 213[1]

> *"Balance cannot be decreed; it is practiced, every day, together."*
>
> — David Fiorucci, working notes (2025)[2]

A theory of conscious balance that stayed in books would contradict itself. If balance is a process, it exists only in being practiced. This chapter therefore offers concrete paths: for a person, for a team or an organization, for a municipality, a region, or a state. It then presents a way of measuring that does not betray what is being measured, the pitfalls that lie in wait for any undertaking of this kind, and the invitation to make Equiconscism an open movement.

None of these paths is mandatory. They are proposals, tested in the practice of advising organizations and grounded, as far as possible, in what the decision sciences and organizational psychology teach us. Each reader will adapt them to their own context: that is precisely what differentiated equity asks.

14.1 Five Principles of Implementation

Start small, where you are. The temptation of grand programs is strong; so is their abandonment rate. An Equiconscist approach begins with one question, one team, one decision. It then spreads by contagion rather than by decree. In the same spirit, Ravi Chaudhry invites us to "start where you are," borrowing a phrase he attributes to the tennis player Arthur Ashe.[3] The SALTER guide (SALTER® — *La boussole consciente pour un monde en mutation* [SALTER®: The conscious compass for a changing world]) adds a rule that applies here too: "Begin by lightening the load, not by adding a demand."[4] Before adding a practice, remove a pointless meeting, a report nobody reads, a procedure that no longer serves. Conscious balance must not become one more burden.

Iterate. The cycle of conscious balance (Perceive, Listen, Discern, Adjust, Answer and Pass On) is not a procedure to be carried out once. It is a loop. Management science has long known this principle in the form of the continuous-improvement wheel popularized by W. Edwards Deming (plan, do, check, act).[5] Chris Argyris and Donald Schön added a valuable distinction: "single-loop" learning corrects actions; "double-loop" learning questions the assumptions and the goals themselves.[6] The ten key questions are double-loop tools: they ask not only "Are we doing things right?" but "Are we doing the right things?"

Measure what matters. What is not observed ends up forgotten; what is badly measured ends up distorted. Section 14.5 proposes a restrained, three-tier dashboard, together with the precautions that go with it.

Involve others. No one can balance, alone, a system of which they are only one part. Involving the people concerned is not a courtesy; it is the condition for perceiving what cannot be seen from where one stands (question 4) and for ensuring that decisions are embraced rather than endured (question 7).

Celebrate. Transformation efforts die more often of exhaustion than of opposition. Acknowledging the steps taken, however modest, thanking those who made them possible, taking time for joy (question 10): this is not an extra; it is what keeps the momentum alive.

14.2 For a Person: The 30-Day Journey

Equiconscism begins with oneself, without stopping there. The 30-day journey brings the ten questions into daily life, a few minutes a day. All it takes is a notebook, a little regularity, and, if possible, a trusted person to whom you give an account.

Days	Stage	What You Do
1–3	Set the frame	Open a journal. Write in one sentence what matters most to you (question 1). Do a first quick self-assessment on the ten questions, without trying to be exact.
4–23	One question every two days	First day: observe your life in the light of the question (where is it present, where is it missing?). Second day: make a single small gesture that nourishes it, and note what you noticed.
24–26	Look back	Reread your journal. Redo the Ten-Question Scorecard (appendix B) and draw your radar. Compare with the first day. Identify the lowest-scoring question and the one that taught you the most.
27–29	Commit	Choose a single question to work on over the next three months. Phrase a commitment in the form "If such-and-such a situation arises, then I will make such-and-such a gesture."
30	Give an account	Share your commitment with a trusted person and set a review date with them.

Three clarifications keep this journey honest.

The first concerns duration. Thirty days are not enough to establish a habit. A frequently cited study by Phillippa Lally and her colleagues, conducted with 96 volunteers, found that it took a median of 66 days for a new behavior to become automatic, with very wide variation across people and behaviors (from 18 to 254 days).[7] The 30-day journey is therefore a beginning, not an end point. It serves to perceive, to experiment, and to choose; the commitment made on the thirtieth day takes over from there.

The second concerns the form of the commitment. Research by the psychologist Peter Gollwitzer on "implementation intentions" shows that resolutions phrased in the form "if…then…" (if such-and-such a situation arises, then I will do such-and-such) are kept markedly more often than general intentions.[8] Hence the wording proposed for day 27.

The third concerns the limits of the exercise. The 30-day journey is a tool for reflection and personal development. It replaces neither psychological support nor medical advice. If the questions bring significant suffering to the surface, the right response is to talk to a professional.

For those who wish to go further, the **Conscious Path** offers a longer inner journey in five stages: The Call, The Exploration, The Alignment, The Crossing, and The Handing On (see appendix A). The 30-day journey can serve as a gateway to it. It can also be practiced **as a family**: one question a week at Sunday dinner, with everyone, children included, saying where they came across it during their week (see chapter 9).

14.3 For a Team or Organization: The 90-Day Road Map

At the meso level—that of teams, companies, associations, and public administrations—Equiconscism finds its natural terrain. The 90-day road map follows the five movements of the cycle of conscious balance. It is deliberately short: an initiative that produces no visible effect within a quarter generally loses its supporters.

Period	Movement of the Cycle	Content	Outcome
Days 1–15	**Perceive**	A clear mandate from senior management; choice of scope (one team, one project, one unit); mapping of those involved, affected, and absent (the "Widening the Gaze" worksheet, appendix B); a SALTER diagnosis if useful.	Written mandate and stakeholder map
Days 16–35	**Listen**	Stakeholder Scorecard; listening circles with people who are seldom heard; interviews with representatives of "those absent" (environmental specialists, young people, local residents).	Summary of perceptions
Days 36–45	**Discern**	Equiconscism workshop: scorecard, radar, discussion of the gaps between self-assessment and stakeholder perception.	Two or three priorities
Days 46–80	**Adjust**	Implementation of two or three actions at most, one of which lightens the load; decisions made by consent; for each action, a person responsible, a deadline, a success criterion.	First visible effects

Period	Movement of the Cycle	Content	Outcome
Days 81–90	**Answer and Pass On**	A short, shared review; telling stakeholders what was done with their input; documenting what was learned; setting the date of the next cycle.	Review and new cycle

The Equiconscism workshop is the heart of this road map. Designed by the author and detailed in appendix B, it brings together 3 to 20 people for 60 to 90 minutes in a first session (half a day when the Stakeholder Scorecard is built into the workshop). It moves from individual reflection (each person scores the ten questions alone) to a nonjudgmental group discussion focused on the gaps, then to listening to stakeholders, and finally to a plan of two or three actions. It is repeated every three to six months. Its strength lies in its simplicity: it requires neither software nor consultants, only time, neutral facilitation, and the willingness to hear what is uncomfortable.

How it fits with SALTER. The two instruments do not duplicate each other. SALTER is a **diagnosis**: using 48 questions, it identifies the intensity of six fractures (Saturation, Artificiality, Lability, Tribalism, Evasion, Rupture) and points to a leverage axis.[9] Equiconscism is a **framework of meaning and action**: it steers decisions toward balance among a measured and shared economy, an inclusive society built on solidarity, and a respected and regenerated living world. In practice, three situations arise.

- When the organization is visibly under strain (overload, conflicts, resignations), it is wise to **start with SALTER**: one cannot widen one's gaze while saturated. The lever identified then becomes one of the priorities of the "Adjust" phase.
- When the organization is stable and seeks to deepen its contribution, one **starts with the ten questions**, and SALTER can serve as a periodic check.
- Since the two 90-day road maps have a comparable rhythm, they can also be **run in the same quarter**, with the SALTER diagnosis feeding the Perceive and Discern phases.

One caution only, already flagged in chapter 8: the two scales run in opposite directions. In SALTER, 5 signals a silent crisis; on the Ten-Question Scorecard, 5 means "fully integrated."

How it fits with existing instruments. Equiconscism does not require setting up a parallel administration. It is best housed in what already exists.

- *Strategy*: question 1 (Meaning and Purpose) and question 6 (Timing and Cycles) can structure the annual strategic review.
- *Risk management*: question 3 (Overall Impact) widens risk mapping to include the effects the organization imposes on others, and not only those it suffers.
- *Human resources*: questions 2, 9, and 10 shed light on occupational health, the passing on of knowledge, and engagement; question 7, on the clarity of roles and delegations. Octocracy® and the LP3® leadership approach, developed by LP3 AG / SA, offer frameworks for organizing this distribution of responsibilities; the Cofluencer® stance denotes the ability to produce an effect together rather than to exert influence.[10]
- *Sustainability reporting*: for the companies concerned, the European requirements have been thoroughly overhauled. Directive (EU) 2026/470, known as "Omnibus I," published in the *Official Journal* on February 26, 2026, restricts the reporting obligation to companies with more

than 1,000 employees and net revenue above €450 million, for financial years beginning on or after January 1, 2027; member states have until March 19, 2027, to transpose it.[11] The European Sustainability Reporting Standards (ESRS) have been revised accordingly: in July 2026 the Commission adopted a simplified version that cuts mandatory data points by more than 60%, together with a voluntary standard intended for companies outside the scope; these delegated acts are subject to a two-month scrutiny period by the European Parliament and the Council, extendable by two months, after which they can be published in the *Official Journal*.[12] In Switzerland, from April to July 2026, the Federal Council put out for consultation a draft federal act on sustainable corporate management that would cover about a hundred large companies for sustainability reporting.[13] For Equiconscism, the lesson is twofold. On the one hand, regulatory pressure is now concentrated on very large companies; for the vast majority of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), the approach becomes **voluntary** again, which leaves more room for meaning and less for compliance. On the other hand, so-called "double materiality" analysis, which examines both the effect of the world on the company and the effect of the company on the world, structures the ESRS approach: it connects directly with question 3. An organization that practices the ten questions thus has valuable qualitative material for a report, whether mandatory or voluntary.

- *The Sustainable Development Goals*: the SDGs provide a common language for situating an organization's contributions (see section 14.5 and appendix C).

14.4 For a Municipality, a Region, a State

At the level of public authorities, the approach changes scale but keeps the same logic. The principle of **subsidiarity** finds its most concrete meaning here: deciding as close as possible to those concerned, thereby, in the words of *Magnifica Humanitas*, "avoiding people being presented with decisions that have already been taken. In this way people can participate in the decision-making process."[14] The principle of **solidarity** reminds us that no one must be left outside the corridor of right measure. We propose a six-step approach, applicable to a municipality of a few hundred inhabitants as much as to a canton or a ministry.

1. **A clear political mandate.** The executive commits publicly to carrying out the approach within a defined scope (a policy, a neighborhood, a budget) and to giving an account of its results.
2. **A widened map.** Using the "Widening the Gaze" worksheet (appendix B), the authority identifies those involved, those affected, and those absent: residents who do not vote, young people, isolated older people, local businesses, neighboring municipalities, ecosystems, future generations.
3. **Listening that truly influences.** Participatory budgets, citizens' assemblies chosen by lot, listening circles: what matters is to climb the ladder of participation described by Sherry Arnstein (see chapter 8) and to announce in advance what will be done with the views gathered.
4. **Discernment with the ten questions.** Major projects are screened against the ten questions, in public session or in committee, and the scorecard is published together with the decision.
5. **Adjustments through the ordinary instruments of public action**, described below.
6. **A public account** and an evaluation on a fixed date, which opens the next cycle.

The dashboard. Public authorities do not have to invent everything. In Switzerland, the Federal Statistical Office's MONET 2030 system tracks about a hundred sustainable development indicators linked to the SDGs,[15] and the Cercle Indicateurs network offers cantons and cities some thirty indicators grouped into ten themes, which make it possible to track change over time and to compare.[16] An Equiconscist dashboard selects about ten indicators from these systems, spread across the three dimensions, and complements them with Equiconscism's two scorecards (see 14.5).

The budget. The budget is the political act in which balance is truly at stake. In 2019, New Zealand presented its first "Wellbeing Budget," which directed new spending toward priorities defined on the basis of quality-of-life indicators rather than growth alone.[17] Wales, with its 2015 Well-being of Future Generations Act (see chapter 9, section 9.8), requires public bodies to follow five ways of working—long term, prevention, integration, collaboration, involvement—which closely overlap with questions 3, 4, 5, and 6.[18] A municipality can, more modestly, present each year a budget annex showing, for the main budget items, their contribution to the three dimensions.

Public procurement. Public purchasing accounts for a considerable share of public authorities' spending. In Switzerland, the revised Federal Act on Public Procurement, in force since January 1, 2021, provides that the contract is awarded to the "most advantageous tender," and no longer simply to the cheapest, and includes economic, environmental, and social sustainability among its objectives.[19] This paradigm shift opens the door to criteria inspired by the ten questions: life cycle (question 3), working conditions and inclusion (questions 2 and 4), regeneration (question 8).

Incentive-based taxation. Equiconscist taxation seeks to make negative externalities pay and to encourage regenerative contributions, in keeping with Pigou's insight recalled in chapter 8. It is also concerned with differentiated equity: an environmental tax whose revenue is partly redistributed to the population, like the Swiss CO_2 levy on heating fuels, can steer behavior without hitting low-income households first.[20]

Local experimentation. Finally, public authorities can declare themselves "pilot territories": test a practice on a small scale and for a limited time, evaluate it publicly, then generalize it, adapt it, or abandon it. This is the institutional application of the principle "start small, iterate." National governments, for their part, can facilitate such experiments through experimentation clauses in legislation and through the systematic sharing of results among local authorities. It is at this level that Equiconscism meets Ravi Chaudhry's macro vision (see chapters 5 and 7): institutions draw the architecture; local practices bring it to life.

14.5 Measuring Conscious Balance: A Three-Tier Dashboard

Measuring conscious balance is both necessary and delicate. Necessary, because responsibility presupposes giving an account. Delicate, because a dynamic balance cannot be reduced to a number. We propose a three-tier dashboard that combines three complementary views.

Tier	View	Tool	Question Asked	Frequency
1	**The view of self**	Ten-Question Scorecard (1 = needs strengthening; 5 = fully integrated)	How do we assess our own conscious balance?	Every 3 to 6 months

Tier	View	Tool	Question Asked	Frequency
2	**The view of others**	Stakeholder Scorecard	How do those who experience our action perceive it?	At midpoint, at the end of the project, then 3 to 6 months later
3	**The view of facts**	About ten result indicators, chosen by dimension	What do the observable data show?	Annual

The first tier measures **awareness**; the second, the **relationship**; the third, the **results**. None is sufficient on its own. A flattering self-assessment contradicted by stakeholders signals a blind spot. A positive perception contradicted by the facts signals communication that has taken precedence over reality. Encouraging facts accompanied by a negative perception often signal a poorly managed process—for instance, people who were not involved. It is in confronting the three tiers with one another that measurement becomes useful.

The third tier: a few indicators per dimension. The point is not to invent new indicators but to choose, from among existing ones, those that best express the balance of an organization or a territory. The author recommends keeping to **ten indicators at most**: beyond that, one is no longer steering, only compiling.

Dimension	Example Indicators (Organization)	Example Indicators (Public Authority)
Measured and shared economy	Ratio of the highest pay to median pay; share of value added devoted to wages, investment, and training; supplier payment times	Median disposable income; poverty rate; household debt; share of local and sustainable public procurement
Inclusive society built on solidarity	Absenteeism and staff turnover rates; job satisfaction and occupational health; diversity in decision-making positions; training hours per person	Social isolation; electoral and civic participation; access to basic services; life-expectancy gap between neighborhoods
Respected and regenerated living world	Greenhouse gas emissions (including the value chain); water and materials consumption; renaturalized areas; share of repairable products	Emissions per inhabitant; air and water quality; sealed (impervious) surfaces; biodiversity (species-monitoring indicators)

These indicators are best aligned with recognized frameworks so that they remain comparable. Three frameworks are particularly useful.

- The **OECD Well-being Framework**, championed by the OECD Centre on Well-being, Inclusion, Sustainability and Equal Opportunity (WISE), distinguishes current well-being (income, work, housing, health, knowledge and skills, environmental quality, subjective well-being, safety, work-life balance, social connections, civic engagement) from the resources for future well-being, in the form of four capitals: natural, economic, human, and social. The report *How's Life?* 2024 draws on more than 80 indicators.[21] The distinction between present well-being and future capitals echoes the temporal tension at the heart of Equiconscism.
- The **Sustainable Development Goals** (17 goals, 169 targets) offer a universal language. Their state of progress calls for humility: according to the United Nations' 2025 report, only 35% of the assessable targets were on track or making moderate progress, and 18% had regressed relative to 2015.[22]

- **Sustainability reporting** standards (the GRI Standards, the revised European ESRS) provide precise definitions for most third-tier indicators.

Goodhart's law, or the risk inherent in measurement. Every measure exerts pressure. In the wording of the anthropologist Marilyn Strathern, which has become the standard form of "Goodhart's law": "When a measure becomes a target, it ceases to be a good measure."[23] The psychologist Donald Campbell had made a related observation: the more a quantitative social indicator is used for decision-making, the more it is exposed to pressures that corrupt it.[24] A team whose bonus depends on its score for question 10 will end up displaying joy; a municipality judged on the number of consultations it holds will multiply consultations that change nothing. Four precautions limit this risk: never link Equiconscism's scorecards to pay or to individual performance appraisal; systematically cross-check the three tiers; change the third-tier indicators from time to time so that they are not "gamed"; and always accompany the figures with a narrative that says what they do not.

Chapter 15 develops these indicators question by question and proposes a Conscious Balance Index.

14.6 The Pitfalls

Every ethical undertaking breeds its counterfeits. Naming the pitfalls in advance is the best way to avoid them.

"Equi-washing." This is the temptation to use the vocabulary of Equiconscism to burnish one's image without changing one's practices: displaying the ten questions without ever letting them change a decision, publishing a flattering scorecard without confronting it with stakeholders' views. The remedy is simple to state: **consistency** between what one says and what one does, and **transparency** about the gaps. An organization that also publishes its low scores, and what it is doing to improve them, is more credible than one that displays only successes.

Lukewarmness. Conscious balance is not the "middle ground" understood as a soft compromise (see chapter 7). Dignity floors and ecological ceilings are not negotiable. An approach that, in the name of balance, gives up on every difficult decision has mistaken balance for immobility.

Perfectionism. Aiming for 5 on all ten questions from the outset leads to discouragement or to dishonesty. An organization that moves from 2.4 to 3.1 in a year has made real progress. Balance is a movement, not a perfect score.

Dogmatism. The ten questions, the scorecards, and the road map are tools, not commandments. Applying them mechanically, without adapting them to the context, would betray differentiated equity. Equiconscism requires no one to adopt its vocabulary: a team can practice conscious balance without ever uttering the word.

Activist burnout. Those who carry a transformation effort are often the first to burn out. They combine their ordinary work with the additional commitment, face resistance, and come to doubt the usefulness of their efforts. Question 2 (Inner / Outer Balance) applies first of all to them: share the load, rotate roles, plan for rest, celebrate. In chemistry, a catalyst facilitates a reaction without being consumed by it (see chapter 3); that is also the condition under which human catalysts endure.

Instrumentalized measurement. Turning the scorecards into a tool for evaluating people or ranking teams destroys the trust needed for sincere answers. The SALTER guide lists among the implementation errors "turning the instrument into an evaluation": from that moment on, it notes, "the instrument measures the response strategy, not the situation."[25] Scores used to sanction produce silence.

14.7 An Open Movement

Equiconscism is offered, not sold. This white paper is published under a **Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0)** license.[26] In concrete terms, anyone may copy it, share it, translate it, and adapt it, on three conditions: credit the source (BY), make no commercial use of it (NC), and distribute adaptations under the same license (SA). The license does not cover the trademarks: SALTER®, LP3®, Octocracy®, and Cofluencer® are trademarks of LP3 AG / SA, and content specific to the SALTER guide remains subject to its own terms of use.

This openness is not a legal detail. It follows from the theory itself. An approach that argues for sharing value, for passing on, and for co-creation could not, without contradicting itself, lock itself into a proprietary model. It calls for four extensions.

A resource hub. The website www.equiconscism.org, currently under construction, is intended to bring together the tools (scorecards, worksheets, workshop outlines), translations, and accounts of experience.

A community of practice. The researchers Étienne Wenger and Jean Lave described "communities of practice": groups of people who share a domain of concern and who learn together by practicing, exchanging experiences, and building a shared repertoire.[27] Equiconscism needs this form of learning: teachers, mayors, craftspeople, caregivers, leaders, parents who try, make mistakes, adjust, and tell their stories. No elite is required; only ordinary people willing to play, each on their own scale, the role of catalysts.

A call to academic research. A theory earns credibility only by agreeing to be put to the test. As the SALTER guide did for its own tools, we distinguish what is empirically established (the foundations cited for each question), what is theoretically grounded but not yet tested in combination (the overall model), and what rests on practice without yet being standardized (the scorecards and their thresholds). Universities and other institutions of higher education are invited to take this up: psychometric validation of the two scorecards (reliability, validity, stability of the interpretation thresholds), longitudinal case studies in organizations and municipalities, comparisons with existing frameworks (OECD, SDGs, ESRS), and research on the link between individual practices and institutional change. Master's and doctoral theses may take these as their subject; criticism will be as welcome as confirmation.

Translations and cultural adaptations. A theory that aspires to be universal must speak several languages and be enriched by other cultures. Translating the ten questions is not merely a matter of changing words; it means checking that they make sense in other traditions of thought and other forms of social organization. Each translation is also an opportunity to improve them.

The movement depends on no single organization and no single person. It depends on what each of us, wherever we are, will do tomorrow with just one of the ten questions.

In Brief

- Putting Equiconscism into practice follows five principles: start small and where you are (by lightening the load rather than by adding a demand), iterate, measure what matters, involve others, celebrate.
- For a person, the 30-day journey brings the ten questions into everyday life and leads to an "if…then…" commitment; it opens the way, without claiming to establish a habit in a month.
- For an organization, the 90-day road map follows the five movements of the cycle of conscious balance; the Equiconscism workshop is at its heart; SALTER serves as a prior or complementary diagnosis, with a scale running in the opposite direction.
- For a municipality, a region, or a state, the approach rests on subsidiarity and solidarity and is expressed through ordinary instruments: dashboard, budget, public procurement, incentive-based taxation, local experimentation.
- The three-tier dashboard cross-checks the view of self (Ten-Question Scorecard), the view of others (Stakeholder Scorecard), and the view of facts (about ten indicators aligned with the OECD, the SDGs, and reporting standards, including the ESRS revised in 2026).
- The main pitfalls are equi-washing, lukewarmness, perfectionism, dogmatism, activist burnout, and using the scorecards to judge people; Goodhart's law, in Strathern's wording, reminds us that a measure turned into a target ceases to measure.
- Published under a CC BY-NC-SA 4.0 license, Equiconscism aims to be an open movement: a resource hub, a community of practice, a call to research and to translation.

Notes

1. Leo XIV, Encyclical Letter *Magnifica Humanitas* (May 15, 2026), no. 213, accessed October 16, 2026, https://www.vatican.va/content/leo-xiv/en/encyclicals/documents/20260515-magnifica-humanitas.html.
2. David Fiorucci, manuscript "Équiconscisme" (working document, 2025), conclusion.
3. Ravi Chaudhry, *Capitalism to Peopleism: Inspiring a Leadership Transformation* (New Delhi: Simon & Schuster India, 2024), p. 233 (subheading "Start Where You Are, Do What You Can"); the sentence "Start where you are. Use what you have. Do what you can." is attributed there to Arthur Ashe (note 8, p. 266, referring to an online collection of quotations).
4. David Fiorucci, SALTER® — *La boussole consciente pour un monde en mutation* (Biel/Bienne: LP3 AG / SA, 2026), ISBN 978-3-9526687-1-9, chap. 19 (the "eight mistakes").
5. W. Edwards Deming, *Out of the Crisis* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1986). Deming himself attributed the origin of the cycle to Walter A. Shewhart.
6. Chris Argyris and Donald A. Schön, *Organizational Learning: A Theory of Action Perspective* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1978).
7. Phillippa Lally, Cornelia H. M. van Jaarsveld, Henry W. W. Potts, and Jane Wardle, "How are habits formed: Modelling habit formation in the real world," *European Journal of Social Psychology* 40, no. 6 (2010): pp. 998–1009.
8. Peter M. Gollwitzer, "Implementation Intentions: Strong Effects of Simple Plans," *American Psychologist* 54, no. 7 (1999): pp. 493–503.
9. Fiorucci, SALTER®, parts III and IV (48-question assessment, 90-day road map). The guide proposes its own 90-day road map (setting the frame, inquiry, interpretation, prioritization, implementation, review), whose rhythm is compatible with the one presented here.

10. On Octocracy: David Fiorucci and Thomas Nast, *Octocratie — Redonnons du sens aux organisations* (Bern: jahr+tag, 2024), ISBN 978-3-9526038-1-9. On LP3®: David Fiorucci and Thomas Nast, *Leader pour une économie durable* (Bern: Stämpfli, 2017), ISBN 978-3-7272-6006-3 (German original 2016). Equiconscism®, SALTER®, LP3®, Octocracy®, and Cofluencer® are registered trademarks of LP3 AG / SA.
11. Directive (EU) 2026/470 of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Directives 2006/43/EC, 2013/34/EU, (EU) 2022/2464, and (EU) 2024/1760 as regards sustainability reporting and due diligence requirements ("Omnibus I"), *Official Journal of the European Union*, February 26, 2026, accessed September 30, 2026, https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/dir/2026/470/oj; entry into force on March 18, 2026, according to the summaries below. The directive retains double materiality (information on the company's impacts and on how sustainability matters affect it). Summaries accessed September 30, 2026: Covington & Burling, "EU CSDDD/CSRD Omnibus Published in Official Journal," February 2026, https://www.cov.com/en/news-and-insights/insights/2026/02/eu-csddd-csrd-omnibus-published-in-official-journal-transposition-delegated-acts-and-guidelines-are-next; Latham & Watkins, "EU Sustainability Omnibus Published in the Official Journal," 2026, https://www.lw.com/en/insights/eu-sustainability-omnibus-published-in-the-official-journal. For due diligence (CSDDD), the thresholds are raised to 5,000 employees and €1.5 billion in revenue, with application from July 26, 2029 (see chapter 9).
12. European Commission, "Commission adopts revised sustainability reporting standards to reduce administrative burdens," July 3, 2026 (reduction of more than 60% in mandatory data points; two-month scrutiny period extendable by two months), accessed September 30, 2026, https://finance.ec.europa.eu/news/commission-adopts-revised-sustainability-reporting-standards-reduce-administrative-burdens-eu-2026-07-03_en; EFRAG, "European Commission Publishes Delegated Act on Revised ESRS and Voluntary Sustainability Reporting," accessed September 30, 2026, https://www.efrag.org. According to EFRAG, the revised standards apply to financial years beginning on or after January 1, 2027. As of the date accessed, the Commission's CSRD page presented these delegated regulations as not yet in force, since they had not been published in the *Official Journal*, accessed September 30, 2026, https://finance.ec.europa.eu/regulation-and-supervision/financial-services-legislation/implementing-and-delegated-acts/corporate-sustainability-reporting-directive_en.
13. Swiss Federal Council, press release of April 2, 2026, on the opening of the consultation on the federal act on sustainable corporate management (indirect counterproposal to a popular initiative), consultation open until July 9, 2026; Federal Office of Justice, press release "Nouvelle loi sur la gestion durable des entreprises: pour mieux protéger les droits de l'homme et l'environnement, et soulager les PME," Bern, April 2, 2026, accessed September 30, 2026, https://www.bj.admin.ch/fr/newnsb/UDalr4CV5UX2_sLwdBHN_. The next stages of the procedure, after the consultation, remain to be followed. The law currently in force is set out in art. 964a ff. of the Code of Obligations.
14. Leo XIV, *Magnifica Humanitas*, no. 70.
15. Federal Statistical Office (FSO), MONET 2030 indicator system; Swiss Confederation, "Mesure de l'état d'avancement de l'Agenda 2030," accessed September 30, 2026, https://www.agenda-2030.eda.admin.ch/fr/mesure-davancement.
16. Federal Office for Spatial Development (ARE), "Cercle Indicateurs: indicateurs de développement durable pour les cantons et les villes," accessed September 30, 2026, https://www.are.admin.ch/fr/cercleindicateurs-f; latest data update: November 11, 2025.
17. New Zealand Government, The Treasury, *The Wellbeing Budget 2019* (Wellington, May 30, 2019).
18. *Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015*, Act of the National Assembly for Wales, 2015 (anaw 2).
19. Federal Act on Public Procurement (PPA) of June 21, 2019, SR 172.056.1, in force since January 1, 2021, art. 2, let. a (purpose: to ensure "the cost-efficient use of public funds in a manner that is economically, ecologically and socially sustainable"), and art. 41 ("The contract is awarded to the most advantageous tender"), English translation (not legally binding), accessed October 16, 2026, https://www.fedlex.admin.ch/eli/cc/2020/126/en; French text: https://www.fedlex.admin.ch/eli/cc/2020/126/fr.
20. Federal Act on the Reduction of Greenhouse Gas Emissions (CO_2 Act), SR 641.71. The CO_2 levy has been charged on fossil heating fuels since 2008; part of its revenue is redistributed to the population and to businesses.
21. OECD, *How's Life? 2024: Well-being and Resilience in Times of Crisis* (Paris: OECD Publishing, November 2024); OECD, *How's Life? 2020: Measuring Well-being* (Paris: OECD Publishing, 2020) (presentation of the revised framework: eleven dimensions of current well-being and four capitals).
22. United Nations, *The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2025* (New York, 2025) (assessment covering 139 targets with available data); summary: Focus 2030, "Summary of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals Report 2025," accessed September 30, 2026, https://focus2030.org/en/summary-of-the-united-nations-sustainable-development-goals-report-2025/.
23. Marilyn Strathern, "'Improving ratings': audit in the British University system," *European Review* 5, no. 3 (1997): pp. 305–321, here p. 308. Charles Goodhart's original formulation (1975) concerns statistical regularities used for purposes of monetary control: "Any observed statistical regularity will tend to collapse once pressure is placed upon it for control purposes."
24. Donald T. Campbell, "Assessing the Impact of Planned Social Change," *Evaluation and Program Planning* 2, no. 1 (1979): pp. 67–90.
25. Fiorucci, *SALTER®*, chap. 19 ("Les erreurs de mise en œuvre les plus fréquentes," error no. 7).
26. Creative Commons, "Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0)," accessed September 30, 2026, https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/deed.en.
27. Jean Lave and Étienne Wenger, *Situated Learning: Legitimate Peripheral Participation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991); Étienne Wenger, *Communities of Practice: Learning, Meaning, and Identity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

CHAPTER 15

Measuring Conscious Balance: Indicators for the Ten Questions

> *"What we measure affects what we do; and if our measurements are flawed, decisions may be distorted."*
>
> — Joseph E. Stiglitz, Amartya Sen, and Jean-Paul Fitoussi, *Report by the Commission on the Measurement of Economic Performance and Social Progress*, 2009[1]

> *"Indicators arise from values (we measure what we care about), and they create values (we care about what we measure)."*
>
> — Donella Meadows, *Indicators and Information Systems for Sustainable Development*, 1998[2]

Albert Einstein is often credited with a sentence that hangs on the wall of many a meeting room: "Not everything that counts can be counted, and not everything that can be counted counts." Nothing shows that it is his. Research into its origin traces it to a sociology textbook published in 1963 by William Bruce Cameron, *Informal Sociology*.[3] The misattribution is instructive: we like to believe that a genius settled the question of measurement once and for all. It has not been settled. It arises anew with every dashboard.

Equiconscism cannot sidestep it. A theory that asks us to "answer and pass on" must say what we give an account of, and how. Chapter 14 set out the framework: a three-tier dashboard that brings together the view of self (the Ten-Question Scorecard), the view of others (the Stakeholder Scorecard), and the view of facts (ten or so result indicators), with the precautions that Goodhart's law demands (section 14.5). This chapter goes one level deeper: design principles, a way of measuring **movement** and not only state, a menu of indicators for each of the ten questions, a simple composite index, three model dashboards, and the link with the macro level.

15.1 Why Measure a Balance That Moves

Measuring a dynamic balance looks like a paradox. A measurement freezes; conscious balance is a process. A measurement isolates one variable; Equiconscism insists on interdependence. Should we give up? No, for three reasons.

The first is **responsibility**. The fifth movement of the cycle, *Answer and Pass On*, asks us to give an account (chapter 7). An organization that claims to "take care of its teams" without ever looking at its overtime or at its employees' perceptions gives an account of nothing.

The second is **lucidity**. Runaways often begin as slow drifts: a workload that grows a little each month, participation that erodes, soil sealed one square meter at a time. Measurement extends the first movement of the cycle, *Perceive*: it makes weak signals visible before they turn into crises.

The third is **dialogue**. A shared figure lets people discuss the same thing; when a team's self-assessment and its stakeholders' perception diverge, the divergence becomes a subject of conversation (chapter 8, section 8.11).

But the tools must fit the task: an indicator designed for a target state ("reach 100") cannot read a regulated oscillation between a floor and a ceiling.

15.2 Eight Design Principles

1. Few indicators. No more than ten result indicators per dashboard (chapter 14). Since the two scorecards already cover the ten questions, the result indicators concentrate on the priority questions.

2. Meaning before numbers. Each indicator is tied to a key question and to a decision it could change. The test: "What would we do differently if this figure changed?" If there is no answer, the indicator is an orphan; we drop it.

3. Three types of measure. We distinguish indicators of **perception** (what people experience), of **process** (what we do, how we decide), and of **result** (what changes in the world). The distinction extends the illustration of the hen (chapter 7, section 7.11): the result is the egg (*output*), the process is the patient, invisible work (*put-put*), and perception is what the hen and its community experience. Whoever measures only the egg ignores the hen's health; whoever measures only the process risks rewarding mere busyness.

4. Trend before absolute value. A single value says little; a series shows a direction. Switzerland's MONET 2030 system, run by the Federal Statistical Office, works this way: it rates each indicator as positive, neutral, or negative according to whether or not the observed trend matches the desired trend, and it refrains from any assessment when fewer than three data points are available.[4] We adopt this rule of caution: no reading of a trend before three measurements.

5. The corridor rather than the maximum. Each result indicator receives, where relevant, a **floor** (below it, dignity or viability is no longer assured), a **ceiling** (above it, excess exhausts, tears apart, or exceeds the limits of the living world), or both. No ceiling is set for renaturalized land; but staff turnover that is too low signals rigidity, and turnover that is too high signals hemorrhage. The limits are not universal norms: they are deliberated, drawing on scientific or legal benchmarks where these exist (chapter 7, section 7.5).

6. Co-constructed indicators. As Donella Meadows wrote in 1998, "The more people involved in indicator selection the better."[5] An indicator chosen by management alone measures what management already looks at. Choosing indicators is a moment of question 4: we ask stakeholders what would best tell us whether we are making progress.

7. Differentiated indicators. The same question is measured differently in a family, a small or medium-sized enterprise (SME), and a municipality: this is differentiated equity applied to measurement. It comes with its limit (chapter 7): **dignity floors** and **ecological ceilings** are not negotiable. We may choose our indicators; we may not choose to ignore an indecent wage or the climate trajectory.

8. Protected indicators. Section 14.5 presented Marilyn Strathern's formulation and the related observation of Donald Campbell, and drew four precautions from them. We add two more. Perception indicators that touch on health or well-being are never collected by name by an employer: they remain anonymous and aggregated, since the law classes health data as sensitive data.[6] And the indicators themselves are reviewed every year, in a "double loop" (chapter 14, section 14.1): are we still measuring what matters?

15.3 Measuring Movement, Not Just State

Most dashboards answer a single question: "Where are we?" They take a snapshot of a state. Yet the first principle of Equiconscism is *movement rather than state*. A pendulum is also described by the amplitude of its swings, by the way it returns toward the center, and by the regularity of the hand that keeps it going (chapter 7, section 7.5). We therefore propose **movement indicators**, applicable to any indicator tracked over time once four measurements are available. Their reading thresholds are benchmarks proposed by this book, not norms.

Movement Indicator	What It Asks	Simple Definition	Reading
Position in the corridor	Where are we between the limits?	(value − floor) ÷ (ceiling − floor) × 100	0 = on the floor; 100 = on the ceiling; around 50 = in the center. Negative or above 100: outside the corridor.
Amplitude	Are we swinging too hard?	(highest value − lowest value) over the last four measurements ÷ width of the corridor	Below 0.5: calm oscillation. Close to 1 or above: the movement fills the whole corridor or spills over it; risk of runaway.
Breaches	Are we touching the dotted lines?	Number of measurements outside the corridor during the period	Zero is the goal; one breach calls for action; repeated breaches, for a fundamental review.
Trend direction	Are we heading in the desired direction?	Comparison of the last three measurements with the desired direction	Favorable, stable, or unfavorable, following the MONET 2030 method. An unfavorable trend over three measurements signals a **slow drift**, even inside the corridor.
Correction time	How long does it take to return?	Detection lag (from the deviation to its discussion) + adjustment lag (from the discussion to the return into the corridor)	The shorter it is, the more alive the regulation. A long detection lag signals a failure of perception; a long adjustment lag, a failure of decision.

Movement Indicator	What It Asks	Simple Definition	Reading
Overcorrection	Are we correcting too abruptly?	Number of times a correction has moved the indicator from one limit to the opposite one	The "yo-yo" effect (a hiring freeze followed by mass recruitment, austerity followed by an abrupt stimulus): a poorly damped pendulum.
Cycle regularity	Is the hand present?	Cycle reviews held ÷ reviews planned, over twelve months	Fewer than half: regulation has become occasional.
Loop-closure rate	Do we follow through?	Actions decided and completed on time ÷ actions decided	A low rate signals that the cycle stops before *Answer and Pass On*.
Perception gap	Do we see what others see?	Ten-Question Scorecard average − Stakeholder Scorecard average (1-to-5 scale)	One point or more: probable blind spot (see appendix B). Track above all its evolution: a narrowing gap signals a widening gaze.

These indicators translate into simple figures the physics of the pendulum presented in chapter 7. **Correction time** corresponds to what the ecologist Crawford Stanley Holling called "engineering" resilience, measured by the speed of return toward equilibrium after a disturbance; Holling distinguished it from "ecological" resilience, which refers to the magnitude of disturbance a system can absorb without changing its nature.[7] **Overcorrection** corresponds to the underdamped pendulum; the ideal is what physicists call "critical" damping: a rapid return toward the center without overshooting it. **Cycle regularity** corresponds to the escapement of Huygens's clock: a small impulse, just enough and at the right moment.

A fictional example: a team sets a floor of 0 and a ceiling of 10 hours of overtime per person per month. Over four months, it records 4, 9, 14, and 6 hours. The current position is 60: the team is inside the corridor. But the amplitude is (14 − 4) ÷ 10 = 1: the movement has filled the whole corridor and spilled over it once. The correction time was one month. The reading: neither "all is well" nor "alert"; the team is regulating, but swinging too hard. The useful question becomes: what pushed the pendulum in the third month?

Two indicators directly measure the presence of the hand: the **regularity of cycle reviews** (question 6) shows whether regulation is being sustained; the **share of collective decisions made by consent** (question 7) shows how it is exercised.

15.4 Indicators for the Ten Questions

For each question, we recall the canonical wording and propose indicators at three levels: the **person or family**, the **organization** (business, nonprofit association, public administration), and the **municipality or state**. The type is indicated: **P** for perception, **Pr** for process, **R** for result. The thresholds are **examples** meant for deliberation; unless a source is cited, they are not norms. The proposals draw as far as possible on existing reference frameworks, so as to remain comparable. These indicators form a **menu**, not a checklist. Many of them extend the "warning signs" of chapter 8: a well-formulated warning sign is already an indicator that does not know it is one.

Question 1 — Meaning and Purpose

KEY QUESTION **Question 1 — Meaning and Purpose**

What is the deeper intention behind what I do, or what we do, and how does it truly serve the living world and the common good?

What we measure: not whether a purpose exists, but whether it actually guides decisions.

Level	Indicator	Type	Threshold or Signal (Example)
Person, family	"Purpose sentence" written down and reread (date of last rereading)	Pr	Alert: not reread in twelve months
Person, family	Share of the week's time devoted to activities judged to be aligned with that sentence (self-estimate)	P	Unfavorable trend over three months
Organization	Share of people able to state the purpose in their own words (brief interviews, at random)	P	Alert below one-half
Organization	Share of major decisions documented with their purpose and their expected effect on the three dimensions	Pr	Floor: all decisions above a threshold set in advance
Organization	Number of opportunities forgone because of the purpose (profitable project declined or modified)	R	Signal: none in three years—purpose never contradicts profit
Municipality, state	Share of public policies accompanied by purpose objectives and well-being indicators	Pr	Rising trend
Municipality, state	Life satisfaction and the sense that what one does is worthwhile (surveys)	P	Widening gap between population groups

Reference frameworks: the OECD *Guidelines on Measuring Subjective Well-being* (2013), which recommend, alongside life satisfaction, so-called "eudaimonic" measures of meaning;[8] for businesses, B Lab's B *Impact Assessment*, a free self-assessment tool measured against standards covering good social, environmental, and governance practices.[9]

Question 2 — Inner / Outer Balance

KEY QUESTION **Question 2 — Inner / Outer Balance**

How can I bring my needs, or those of our group, into harmony with those of others, of society, and of nature?

What we measure: workload and rest, the sharing of value, the gap between what we take and what we give.

Level	Indicator	Type	Threshold or Signal (Example)
Person, family	Hours of paid work per week	R	Ceiling: 50 hours, the OECD threshold for "very long hours"
Person, family	Division of domestic and care work among adults	R	Signal: one adult persistently takes on more than two-thirds
Person, family	WHO-5 Well-Being Index, strictly for personal use	P	Score of 50 or less out of 100: talk to a professional
Organization	Ratio of the highest pay to median pay	R	Ceiling set, published, and discussed with stakeholders
Organization	Gender pay gap, for comparable positions and qualifications	R	Floor: no unexplained gap
Organization	Average overtime and share of people working more than 50 hours a week	R	Ceiling set by the team; alert if it rises over three measurements while results are good
Municipality, state	Poverty rate; ratio of the income of the richest 10% to that of the poorest 40% (Palma ratio)	R	Dignity floor; Ravi Chaudhry proposes a Palma ratio of 2 as a benchmark
Municipality, state	Share of employees working very long hours	R	Falling trend

Reference frameworks: the OECD **Better Life Index** (share of employees working 50 hours or more a week, time devoted to leisure and personal care);[10] the WHO's WHO-5 index, whose threshold of 50 out of 100 is used for screening, not diagnosis;[11] the GRI 2 and GRI 405 standards;[12] in Switzerland, the free Logib tool, since pay equity analysis is mandatory for employers with 100 or more employees;[13] the ISO 45003:2021 standard on psychosocial risks;[14] SDG indicators 1.2.1, 5.4.1, and 8.5.1.[15]

Question 3 — Overall Impact

> **KEY QUESTION** **Question 3 — Overall Impact**
>
> What are the consequences of my choices—in the short, medium, and long term—at the ecological, social, economic, and cultural levels?

What we measure: effects beyond the organization's boundaries and the financial year, including those that others pay for.

Level	Indicator	Type	Threshold or Signal (Example)
Person, family	Household carbon footprint, estimated each year with a recognized calculator	R	Ceiling: a downward trajectory decided by the household
Person, family	Share of major purchases and decisions preceded by the "horizons matrix" (chapter 8)	Pr	Rising trend
Organization	Greenhouse gas emissions, scopes 1, 2, and 3, compared with a trajectory compatible with 1.5°C	R	Ceiling: the trajectory
Organization	Share of products or services covered by a life-cycle assessment	Pr	Floor for the main products
Organization	Share of major decisions subjected to an impact assessment that includes the social and cultural dimensions	Pr	Signal: social or cultural effects deemed "unmeasurable," and therefore left out
Municipality, state	Territorial emissions and footprint (including imports) per inhabitant	R	Ceiling: the adopted climate trajectory
Municipality, state	Share of large projects subjected to an independent, published impact study	Pr	Floor: all projects above a set threshold

Reference frameworks: the *GHG Protocol Corporate Accounting and Reporting Standard*, which distinguishes direct emissions (scope 1), indirect emissions from purchased energy (scope 2), and other value-chain emissions (scope 3);[16] the ISO 14040 and 14044 standards on life-cycle assessment (chapter 8); the GRI 305 (emissions) and GRI 102 (climate change, 2025) standards; for the companies concerned, the ESRS E1 standard; at the macro level, the planetary boundaries, seven of nine of which are transgressed according to the 2025 assessment (chapter 7);[17] for Switzerland, MONET 2030 and Cercle Indicateurs.

Question 4 — Inclusion and Listening

> **KEY QUESTION** **Question 4 — Inclusion and Listening**
>
> Who has not yet been heard or taken into account, and how can we give them a voice that truly influences the decision?

What we measure: not the number of consultations, but their actual influence on the decision.

Level	Indicator	Type	Threshold or Signal (Example)
Person, family	Share of members who say they were listened to at the last family council	P	Alert: one member answers "no" twice in a row

Level	Indicator	Type	Threshold or Signal (Example)
Organization	Rung reached on Arnstein's ladder of participation for the main decisions	Pr	Floor: above "tokenism" for decisions that directly affect people
Organization	Share of input received that led to written feedback ("what we did with your input")	Pr	Floor: 100%
Organization	Psychological safety ("people can speak up here without fear")	P	Trend; gaps between teams
Organization	Diversity in decision-making positions	R	Trend toward the composition of the workforce
Municipality, state	Turnout in popular votes and municipal assemblies, by age group	R	Signal: widening gap between generations
Municipality, state	Share of the population who believe that decision-making is inclusive and responsive	P	Rising trend

Reference frameworks: Sherry Arnstein's ladder (chapter 8); Amy Edmondson's psychological safety scale;[18] SDG indicators 5.5.2 (proportion of women in managerial positions), 11.3.2 (cities with a structure for the direct participation of civil society in urban planning), and 16.7.2 (proportion of the population who believe decision-making is inclusive and responsive);[19] the GRI 405 standard; the Stakeholder Scorecard (appendix B, section B.2).

Question 5 — Shared Responsibility

> **KEY QUESTION** **Question 5 — Shared Responsibility**
>
> What share of personal or collective responsibility do we take on, and how do we make it visible, so that it truly commits us?

What we measure: the visibility of responsibilities and the keeping of commitments.

Level	Indicator	Type	Threshold or Signal (Example)
Person, family	"If…then…" commitments kept ÷ commitments made (chapter 14)	R	Trend; reread at each review
Person, family	Up-to-date map of family tasks, with a name for each task	Pr	Signal: one person carries most of the invisible tasks
Organization	Commitment-keeping rate: commitments delivered on time ÷ commitments announced	R	Alert below two-thirds

Level	Indicator	Type	Threshold or Signal (Example)
Organization	Share of collective decisions that come with a responsible person, a deadline, and a success criterion	Pr	Floor: all
Organization	Reports received through the whistleblowing system, share handled on time, median handling time	Pr	Signal: zero reports for a long time in a large organization—silence is not the absence of problems
Municipality, state	Share of the commitments in the legislative-term program tracked by published indicators	Pr	Floor: all
Municipality, state	Trust in institutions (regular surveys)	P	Trend

Reference frameworks: the GRI 2 standard (general disclosures); the ISO 37002:2021 standard on whistleblowing management systems; Directive (EU) 2019/1937 on the protection of whistleblowers; the OECD Survey on Drivers of Trust in Public Institutions.[20]

Question 6 — Timing and Cycles

> **KEY QUESTION** **Question 6 — Timing and Cycles**
>
> Where are we in the natural cycle of this project or this community, and what is the right rhythm for the next step?

What we measure: the regularity of regulation, the capacity to stop, the time horizon of our gaze.

Level	Indicator	Type	Threshold or Signal (Example)
Person, family	Personal or family seasonal review held (once or twice a year)	Pr	Floor: once a year
Person, family	Days off actually taken ÷ days due	R	Floor: all of them
Organization	Regularity of cycle reviews (held ÷ planned)	Pr	Alert: two consecutive reviews canceled
Organization	Number of projects deliberately stopped during the year	R	Signal: none—"no project is ever stopped" (chapter 8)
Organization	Voluntary staff turnover	R	Two-limit corridor, set according to the sector: too low, rigidity; too high, hemorrhage
Municipality, state	Time horizon of the financial plan and the land-use plan	Pr	Floor: beyond one legislative term
Municipality, state	Number of simultaneous reforms affecting the same population	Pr	Deliberated ceiling, to respect the capacity to absorb change

Reference frameworks: Holling's adaptive cycle (chapters 3, 6, and 8); the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, which makes the long term one of the five ways of working required of public bodies (chapter 14); for public finances, the harmonized financial indicators of the Harmonized Accounting Model 2 (HAM2) for Swiss public finances, such as the self-financing ratio (the share of net investment financed from the public body's own resources).[21]

Question 7 — Power and Consent

> **KEY QUESTION** **Question 7 — Power and Consent**
>
> How do we distribute the domains of power so that decisions are made by consent rather than through coercion or inertia?

What we measure: the distribution of power, the mode of decision-making, the freedom to object.

Level	Indicator	Type	Threshold or Signal (Example)
Person, family	Share of joint decisions made in the family council, by consent	Pr	Rising trend, adapted to the children's ages
Organization	Share of collective decisions made by consent (objection round)	Pr	No universal floor; rising trend for decisions that commit the group
Organization	Up-to-date map of decision-making domains (date of last revision)	Pr	Alert: more than twelve months
Organization	Concentration of power: share of major decisions made by a single person; number of key roles without a deputy	R	Deliberated ceiling; alert as soon as a vital role depends on a single person
Organization	Share of people who dare to object in the presence of their superiors	P	Alert: fewer than half
Municipality, state	Share of the capital budget decided through participatory processes	Pr	Trend
Municipality, state	Representation of population groups in public institutions; vacant militia offices (part-time civic posts)	R	Narrowing representation gap

Reference frameworks: decision by consent in sociocracy (Gerard Endenburg) and Octocracy (chapter 8); the GRI 2 standard (general disclosures); SDG indicator 16.7.1 (positions in national and local institutions—legislatures, the public service, the judiciary—compared with the distribution of the population);[22] the democracy indices used in chapter 1.

Question 8 — Regenerative Innovation

KEY QUESTION **Question 8 — Regenerative Innovation**

In what way does what we create contribute not only to "destroying less" but to regenerating human and natural resources?

What we measure: what is left in better shape, for the living world as for people.

Level	Indicator	Type	Threshold or Signal (Example)
Person, family	Items repaired ÷ items broken	R	Rising trend
Person, family	Hours devoted to learning or passing on a skill	Pr	Floor chosen by each person
Organization	Share of revenue or projects on the "repairs" or "regenerates" rungs of the regeneration ladder (chapter 8)	R	Rising trend
Organization	Managed land renaturalized or landscaped for biodiversity	R	Floor: no net loss
Organization	Repairability of products; service life of equipment	R	Rising trend
Organization	Hours of training per person; share of people who come out of a project "more inspired than when they went in"	R / P	Training floor; alert if teams come out "drained"
Municipality, state	Land returned to nature ÷ land newly sealed	R	Floor: at least as much land returned as land sealed, over time
Municipality, state	Circular material use rate (chapter 10)	R	Rising trend

Reference frameworks: Bill Reed's ladder, from conventional to regenerative practice (chapter 8); the GRI 101 (biodiversity, 2024) and GRI 404 (training and education) standards; the ESRS E4 and E5 standards for the companies concerned; for repairability, the repairability class (A to E) shown on the EU energy label for smartphones and tablets since June 20, 2025.[23]

Question 9 — Legacy and Example

KEY QUESTION **Question 9 — Legacy and Example**

What do we want to leave as our legacy—values, knowledge, practices—and how are we already demonstrating it in the way we act?

What we measure: the continuity of knowledge and the consistency between what we ask of others and what we do.

Level	Indicator	Type	Threshold or Signal (Example)
Person, family	Frequency of contacts and activities across generations	Pr	Floor chosen by the family
Organization	Share of key roles with a succession plan and a trained deputy	Pr	Floor: all vital roles
Organization	Share of completed projects with a documented learning log consulted by the next team	Pr	Floor: all major projects
Organization	Leading by example: gap between the change in executive pay and the change in median pay; perception that "management applies to itself the rules it asks of others"	R / P	Alert: management exempts itself
Municipality, state	Share of 25-year-olds holding an upper-secondary qualification	R	Objective of the Confederation and the cantons: 95% (chapter 10)
Municipality, state	Existence and resources of an institution responsible for future generations	Pr	Floor: an explicit mandate

Reference frameworks: the ISO 30414 standard on human capital reporting, revised in 2025, whose areas include mobility and succession planning as well as skills development;[24] the indicators for SDG 4; the B *Impact Assessment* (question 1).

Question 10 — Joy and Vitality

> **KEY QUESTION** **Question 10 — Joy and Vitality**
>
> Does this action nourish joy, the élan of life, and beauty—signs of conscious balance rather than of mere performance?

What we measure: vitality, and the gap between functioning and élan. This is the question most exposed to Goodhart's law: we never set a target for joy.

Level	Indicator	Type	Threshold or Signal (Example)
Person, family	Life satisfaction (0 to 10); "family weather check" (1 to 5) and spread of scores	P	Signal: a spread of three points or more between members
Person, family	Moments of gratitude or beauty noted during the week	Pr	Trend
Organization	Perceived engagement and vitality (anonymous survey)	P	Trend; gaps between teams

Level	Indicator	Type	Threshold or Signal (Example)
Organization	Unexplained voluntary departures; repeated short-term absences	R	Alert: an increase over three measurements
Organization	Perceived quality of workplaces (light, greenery, beauty, quiet)	P	Trend
Municipality, state	Life satisfaction of the population, broken down by group	P	Widening gap between groups
Municipality, state	Share of the population with walking access to a public green space; cultural and sports participation of low-income households	R	Access floor; narrowing gap with the average

Reference frameworks: the *OECD Guidelines on Measuring Subjective Well-being* and the **Better Life Index**, which measures life satisfaction on a scale of 0 to 10;[25] the WHO-5 index (personal use); Gallup's engagement surveys (chapter 1); SDG indicator 11.7.1 (share of the built-up area of cities that is open space for public use);[26] the reflection in chapter 11 on beauty as an indicator of balance.

> **FOCUS How to Choose from This Menu**
>
> For each priority question, select **one** indicator, two at most. Make sure your dashboard as a whole mixes all three types (perception, process, result). For each result indicator, set with the people concerned a desired direction and, if possible, a floor and a ceiling. Write all of this down before the first measurement, not after.

15.5 The Conscious Balance Index

Do we need a single number? The Stiglitz-Sen-Fitoussi Commission warned against the temptation: a meter that added up a car's speed and the remaining level of gasoline, it wrote, would be of no help to the driver; what is needed is a dashboard on which each piece of information remains visible.[27] The warning is sound. And yet those who are just starting out need a simple benchmark, one that opens the conversation and tracks a trajectory. We therefore propose a **Conscious Balance Index** (CBI), on one non-negotiable condition: it is always presented together with its three components, its alerts, and its radar. It serves as a gateway into the dashboard, never as a substitute for it.

The Formula

The CBI combines the three tiers of the chapter 14 dashboard, brought onto a common scale of 0 to 100.

- **S** (view of self) = (Ten-Question Scorecard average − 1) ÷ 4 × 100
- **O** (view of others) = (Stakeholder Scorecard average − 1) ÷ 4 × 100

- **F** (view of facts) = number of result indicators inside their corridor ÷ number of result indicators reported × 100

***CBI* = 0.3 × S + 0.3 × O + 0.4 × F**

The weighting is explicit and justified. The view of facts weighs slightly more, because it is the least exposed to complacency; self-assessment and stakeholder perception carry equal weight, because Equiconscism refuses to privilege one's own view over that of others. An organization may choose a different weighting, for example one-third for each tier, on two conditions: it must set and publish the weighting **before** measuring, and it must not change it from one period to the next without saying so.

The reading zones follow those of the Ten-Question Scorecard (chapter 8): from 0 to 25, **alert**; above 25 up to 50, **transition**; above 50 up to 75, **emergence**; above 75, **balance**. An average of 2 on the scorecard indeed corresponds to 25, an average of 3 to 50, and an average of 4 to 75.

The Breached-Floor Rule

An average can mask suffering. Appendix B states it for the scorecard: "a breached floor cannot be offset by a ceiling reached elsewhere." The CBI applies the same rule. An **alert** is triggered, whatever the value of the index, as soon as any of the following situations arises:

- a question on the Ten-Question Scorecard is scored 1 (in a group: a question whose average is below 2);
- a result indicator is below its floor or above its ceiling;
- a stakeholder group gives an average of 2 or less (alert zone of scorecard B.2).

As long as the alert persists, the CBI cannot be read above the "transition" zone, even if the calculation yields more. The index is then published with a flag that names the limit breached. A second flag, the **blind-spot flag**, appears when S exceeds O by 25 points or more, which corresponds to the one-point gap on the 1-to-5 scale flagged in appendix B.

Reading It on the Radar

The conscious balance radar (chapter 8, section 8.12) naturally accommodates all three tiers. On each of the ten axes, three points are plotted: the score from the Ten-Question Scorecard; the score of the corresponding statements on the Stakeholder Scorecard, using the "Link to the Ten Questions" column in appendix B; and, when result indicators are attached to that question, the share of them that lie inside the corridor, converted to the 1-to-5 scale (1 + 4 × the share). The three plots are read together. Where they overlap, the views converge. Where they diverge, it is time to talk.

IN PRACTICE **A Complete Calculation (Fictional Example)**

A fictional SME with fifty employees takes its first measurement. The Ten-Question Scorecard gives an average of 3.4, so S = (3.4 − 1) ÷ 4 × 100 = 60. The Stakeholder Scorecard gives 3.0, so O = 50. Of eight result indicators, six are inside their corridor: F = 75. The index is 0.3 × 60 + 0.3 × 50 + 0.4 × 75 = 18 + 15 + 30 = **63**, which falls in the "emergence" zone. But two alerts light up. Overtime exceeds the ceiling set by the team, and question 4 (Inclusion and Listening) receives a group average of 1.8. The published reading is therefore: **CBI 63 — reading capped at "transition"; limits breached: overtime, question 4**. The gap between S and O is 10 points: no general blind spot, but the radar shows that on question 7 the team scores itself 4 while the stakeholders give 2.5. The workshop that follows does not discuss the figure 63. It discusses overtime, question 4, and the gap on question 7. That is exactly what the index is meant to produce.

The CBI does not replace discussion. It prepares it, frames it, and keeps a record of it from one period to the next. An organization that published its index without its components, without its flags, and without the narrative that accompanies them would turn Equiconscism into what chapter 14 calls "equi-washing."

15.6 Three Model Dashboards

The following three dashboards are **fictional examples**, meant to show how to choose from the menu in section 15.4. The thresholds are illustrative. Each dashboard has ten rows at most; both scorecards are included, since on their own they cover the ten questions.

A Family (Fictional Example)

Two adults, two children, and a grandmother who lives alone nearby.

No.	Indicator	Question	Type	Threshold (Example)	Frequency
1	Ten-Question Scorecard completed as a family (adapted to the children's ages)	1 to 10	P	Alert: one question scored 1	Semiannual
2	"Family weather check" (1 to 5) and spread of scores	10, 2	P	Alert: spread of 3 points or more	Monthly
3	Hours of paid work per adult	2	R	Ceiling: 50 hours per week	Monthly
4	Share of domestic work taken on by the most heavily loaded adult	2, 5	R	Ceiling: 60%	Semiannual
5	Shared meals without screens	10, 4	Pr	Floor: three per week	Weekly
6	Family council held, decisions by consent	7, 6	Pr	Floor: one per month	Monthly

No.	Indicator	Question	Type	Threshold (Example)	Frequency
7	Emergency savings, in months of current expenses	2	R	Floor: three months	Quarterly
8	Estimated household carbon footprint	3	R	Downward trajectory decided together	Annual
9	Items repaired ÷ items broken	8	R	Rising trend	Annual
10	Moments shared with the grandmother	9	Pr	Floor: two per month	Monthly

A Fifty-Person SME (Fictional Example)

A technical services company located in a medium-sized town.

No.	Indicator	Question	Type	Threshold (Example)	Frequency
1	Ten-Question Scorecard (average, minimum, spread)	1 to 10	P	Alert: one question averaging below 2	Semiannual
2	Stakeholder Scorecard, by group	1 to 10	P	Alert: one group at 2 or less	Annual
3	Share of people able to state the purpose	1	P	Floor: 70%	Annual
4	Ratio of the highest pay to median pay	2	R	Ceiling: 5 to 1, published	Annual
5	Average overtime per person	2	R	Ceiling: 10 hours per month	Monthly
6	Emissions, scopes 1 to 3, measured against a 1.5°C trajectory	3	R	Ceiling: the trajectory	Annual
7	Share of input received that got written feedback	4	Pr	Floor: 100%	Quarterly
8	Commitment-keeping rate	5	R	Floor: two-thirds	Quarterly
9	Key roles with a trained deputy	9, 7	Pr	Floor: all	Semiannual
10	Voluntary staff turnover	6, 10	R	Corridor: between 4% and 12%	Annual

The movement indicators of section 15.3 (regularity of cycle reviews, loop-closure rate, perception gap) are calculated from these data without adding anything to the dashboard.

A Municipality of 10,000 Inhabitants (Fictional Example)

A medium-sized Swiss municipality, with a municipal council and an elected municipal legislature.

No.	Indicator	Question	Type	Threshold (Example)	Frequency
1	Ten-Question Scorecard (executive and senior administrative staff)	1 to 10	P	Alert: one question averaging below 2	Annual
2	Stakeholder Scorecard (sample of residents, associations, businesses)	1 to 10	P	Alert: one group at 2 or less	Every two years
3	Turnout in municipal popular votes, by age group	4	R	Narrowing gap between age groups	At each ballot
4	Share of the capital budget decided through participatory processes	7, 4	Pr	Rising trend	Annual
5	Social assistance rate and time taken to access benefits	2	R	Floor: access without excessive delay	Annual
6	Greenhouse gas emissions per inhabitant	3	R	Ceiling: the cantonal or federal climate trajectory	Annual
7	Land returned to nature ÷ land newly sealed	8	R	Floor: 1 by the set target date	Annual
8	Self-financing ratio of investments	6	R	Corridor set with the municipal legislature	Annual
9	Vacant militia offices	5, 9	R	Ceiling: no office vacant for more than one year	Annual
10	Share of residents living within a ten-minute walk of a public green space	10	R	Deliberated floor; rising trend	Every two years

Several of these indicators already exist in MONET 2030, Cercle Indicateurs, or the harmonized financial indicators: the point is to choose them and link them to the ten questions, not to reinvent them (chapter 14, section 14.4).

15.7 From Meso to Macro: What Local Dashboards Can Contribute

Chapter 5 traced the attempts to measure progress beyond GDP, from Robert F. Kennedy's speech of March 18, 1968, which faulted gross national product for measuring "everything in short, except that which makes life worthwhile,"[28] all the way to the SDGs. It concluded that these dashboards shed light on the macro level without reaching down to the decisions of an SME, a municipal council, or a family. *Magnifica Humanitas* shares this diagnosis: "The development of parameters and metrics complementary to GDP is crucial [...]."[29]

The dashboards in this chapter do not replace these macro indicators. They can feed them, and be fed by them, in four ways.

Speaking the same language. A local indicator that adopts the definition of a national or international indicator (SDGs, MONET 2030, OECD, GRI) can be aggregated, compared, and connected. That is why section 15.4 systematically refers to existing frameworks. The Cercle Indicateurs network shows that such pooling is possible: cantons and cities track some thirty indicators across ten themes, with shared definitions.[30]

Bringing up what the macro level cannot see. National statistics measure income, emissions, and life expectancy well; they measure the quality of processes poorly: decisions by consent, commitments kept, feedback given to the people consulted, a team's vitality. Yet it is at the level of organizations and municipalities that much of conscious balance is played out. Aggregated, anonymized data drawn from thousands of scorecards could one day shed light on this "missing middle" of public statistics: an agenda for research (chapter 14, section 14.7).

Bringing the limits down. In the other direction, the macro level supplies the meso level with what it cannot establish on its own: ecological ceilings (planetary boundaries, carbon budgets, climate trajectories) and dignity floors (fundamental rights, poverty lines, a living wage). An SME does not calculate humanity's carbon budget; it derives its own trajectory from it. Floors and ceilings come down; perceptions and processes go up.

Connecting the views. At the macro level, Ravi Chaudhry proposes judging a country's development by the growth in per capita income of the poorest 80%, and regarding as still "developing" any country whose Palma ratio exceeds 2.[31] His proposal is a result indicator, designed for states. Equiconscism adds the tiers of perception and process, designed for organizations and municipalities. The two approaches complement each other without ranking one above the other: our friend himself reminds us that seeing the whole allows us to recognize that one's own domain of work or influence "is not and cannot be a stand-alone, independent system, which can be in equilibrium by itself."[32] No local dashboard is in balance on its own; no national indicator is alive without the local dashboards that bring it into being.

15.8 Pitfalls and Good Practices

Section 14.6 described the pitfalls of any Equiconscist approach. Measurement has its own.

Pitfall	How to Recognize It	Remedy
The bloated dashboard	Sixty indicators, no steering	Ten at most; remove before adding

Pitfall	How to Recognize It	Remedy
The orphan indicator	A figure tracked out of habit that changes no decision	The test of principle 2
The reassuring average	A CBI of 70 that hides a breached floor	The breached-floor rule; publish the flags
The confusion of types	"We consulted, so we listened"	State the type of each indicator
The ranking	Scorecards designed as mirrors are used to compare teams or municipalities	Compare yourself first with yourself, over time
The alibi process	"Decisions by consent" where no one dares to object	Cross-check process against perception
The intrusion	Health data collected by name "for your own good"	Anonymity, aggregation, data protection

Four good practices sum up the spirit of this chapter: **write down the method before measuring** (indicators, limits, weighting); **publish the bad news too**, along with what is being done about it; **accompany every figure with a narrative**; **review the indicators themselves every year**, with stakeholders.

In Brief

- Measuring conscious balance is necessary in order to give an account, perceive slow drifts, and nourish dialogue; it must be done with tools suited to a balance that moves.
- Eight principles guide the design: few indicators; meaning before numbers; a mix of perception, process, and result; trend before absolute value; the corridor rather than the maximum; co-construction; differentiation; protection against Goodhart's law.
- **Movement indicators** (position in the corridor, amplitude, breaches, trend direction, correction time, overcorrection, cycle regularity, loop-closure rate, perception gap) measure regulation itself, not just state.
- For each of the ten questions, a menu of indicators is proposed at three levels, with their type, indicative thresholds, and existing reference frameworks (OECD, SDGs, MONET 2030, Cercle Indicateurs, GRI, ESRS, ISO, WHO); one or two are selected per priority question.
- The **Conscious Balance Index** (CBI = 0.3 × self + 0.3 × others + 0.4 × facts) provides a simple benchmark, always published with its components, its flags, and its radar; a breached floor caps its reading, whatever the average.
- Three model dashboards (family, SME, municipality) show that ten or so indicators are enough.
- Local dashboards complement macro indicators: limits come down, perceptions and processes go up; the index never replaces discussion.

Notes

1. Joseph E. Stiglitz, Amartya Sen, and Jean-Paul Fitoussi, *Report by the Commission on the Measurement of Economic Performance and Social Progress* (Paris, September 2009), executive summary, § 3. Version published by Eurostat, accessed September 30, 2026, https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/8131721/8131772/Stiglitz-Sen-Fitoussi-Commission-report.pdf.

2. Donella Meadows, *Indicators and Information Systems for Sustainable Development*, report to the Balaton Group (Hartland, VT: The Sustainability Institute, September 1998), chap. 1, p. 2, accessed September 30, 2026, https://donellameadows.org/wp-content/userfiles/IndicatorsInformation.pdf.
3. William Bruce Cameron, *Informal Sociology: A Casual Introduction to Sociological Thinking* (New York: Random House, 1963) (LCCN 63013725; digitized copy with restricted access, accessed September 30, 2026, https://archive.org/details/informalsociolog0000came). The sentence is generally reported there in the form "not everything that can be counted counts, and not everything that counts can be counted"; the passage could not be consulted directly, hence the absence of a page number.
4. Federal Statistical Office (FSO), "Le système d'indicateurs MONET 2030," accessed September 30, 2026, https://www.bfs.admin.ch/bfs/fr/home/statistiques/developpement-durable/monet-2030.html: the assessment is positive when "the observed trend corresponds to the desired trend" (our translation); no assessment is given below three data points.
5. Meadows, *Indicators and Information Systems*, chap. 5, p. 25.
6. In Switzerland, Federal Act on Data Protection (FADP) of September 25, 2020, SR 235.1, in force since September 1, 2023, art. 5, let. c, no. 2 (health data are sensitive personal data); in the European Union, Regulation (EU) 2016/679 (GDPR), art. 9.
7. C. S. Holling, "Engineering Resilience versus Ecological Resilience," in *Engineering Within Ecological Constraints*, ed. Peter C. Schulze (Washington, DC: National Academy Press, 1996), pp. 31–44.
8. OECD, *OECD Guidelines on Measuring Subjective Well-being* (Paris: OECD Publishing, 2013), https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264191655-en.
9. B Lab, "B Impact Assessment," accessed September 30, 2026, https://www.bcorporation.net/en-us/programs-and-tools/b-impact-assessment/: a free self-assessment tool measured against B Lab's standards, which are organized into seven "Impact Topics" and define good "social, environmental, and governance" practices; https://www.bcorporation.net/en-us/standards/.
10. OECD, *Better Life Index*, "Work-Life Balance" section, accessed September 30, 2026, https://www.oecdbetterlifeindex.org/topics/work-life-balance/: share of employees working 50 hours or more per week (about 10% on average across the OECD) and time devoted to leisure and personal care.
11. World Health Organization, *The World Health Organization-Five Well-Being Index (WHO-5)* (Geneva: WHO, 2024) (WHO/UCN/MSD/MHE/2024.01), accessed September 30, 2026, https://www.who.int/publications/m/item/WHO-UCN-MSD-MHE-2024.01; Christian Winther Topp, Søren Dinesen Østergaard, Susan Søndergaard, and Per Bech, "The WHO-5 Well-Being Index: A Systematic Review of the Literature," *Psychotherapy and Psychosomatics* 84, no. 3 (2015): pp. 167–176, DOI: 10.1159/000376585 (raw score from 0 to 25 multiplied by 4; screening threshold ≤ 50; clinically relevant change: 10 points). The WHO-5 is a screening instrument, not a diagnostic one.
12. Global Reporting Initiative, *GRI 2: General Disclosures 2021* and *GRI 405: Diversity and Equal Opportunity 2016*, official list of standards, accessed September 30, 2026, https://www.globalreporting.org/how-to-use-the-gri-standards/gri-standards-english-language/.
13. Federal Office for Gender Equality (FOGE), "Égalité salariale: Logib," accessed September 30, 2026, https://www.ebg.admin.ch/fr/egalite-salariale-logib; Federal Act on Gender Equality (GEA), SR 151.1, art. 13a ff.
14. ISO 45003:2021, *Occupational health and safety management — Psychological health and safety at work — Guidelines for managing psychosocial risks* (Geneva: ISO, 2021), accessed September 30, 2026, https://www.iso.org/standard/64283.html.
15. United Nations Statistics Division, global indicator framework for the SDGs (234 unique indicators), https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/indicators/indicators-list/; metadata sheets for indicators 5.4.1 ("Proportion of time spent on unpaid domestic and care work, by sex, age and location") and 8.5.1 ("Average hourly earnings of employees, by sex, age, occupation and persons with disabilities"), accessed September 30, 2026, https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/metadata/. Indicator 1.2.1: "Proportion of population living below the national poverty line, by sex and age," accessed September 30, 2026, https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/metadata/files/Metadata-01-02-01.pdf.
16. World Resources Institute and World Business Council for Sustainable Development, *GHG Protocol Corporate Accounting and Reporting Standard* and *Corporate Value Chain (Scope 3) Standard*, accessed September 30, 2026, https://ghgprotocol.org/corporate-standard.
17. Stockholm Resilience Centre, "Planetary boundaries," accessed September 30, 2026, https://www.stockholmresilience.org/research/planetary-boundaries.html: in 2025, ocean acidification is assessed as the seventh boundary transgressed. See chapter 7, note 5.
18. Amy Edmondson, "Psychological Safety and Learning Behavior in Work Teams," *Administrative Science Quarterly* 44, no. 2 (1999): pp. 350–383, DOI: 10.2307/2666999.
19. United Nations, metadata sheets for SDG indicators 5.5.2 ("Proportion of women in managerial positions," https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/metadata/files/Metadata-05-05-02.pdf), 11.3.2 ("Proportion of cities with a direct participation structure of civil society in urban planning and management that operates regularly and democratically"), and 16.7.2 ("Proportion of population who believe decision-making is inclusive and responsive, by sex, age, disability and population group"), accessed September 30, 2026, https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/metadata/files/Metadata-11-03-02.pdf and https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/metadata/files/Metadata-16-07-02.pdf.
20. *GRI 2: General Disclosures 2021* (see note 12); ISO 37002:2021, *Whistleblowing management systems — Guidelines* (Geneva: ISO, 2021), https://www.iso.org/standard/65035.html; Directive (EU) 2019/1937 of the European Parliament and of the Council of October 23, 2019, on the protection of persons who report breaches of Union law, https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/dir/2019/1937/oj; OECD, *OECD Survey on Drivers of Trust in Public Institutions – 2024 Results: Building Trust in a Complex Policy Environment* (Paris: OECD Publishing, 2024) (surveys of 2021 and late 2023) (all accessed September 30, 2026).

21. Swiss Public Sector Financial Reporting Advisory Committee (SRS-CSPCP), Harmonized Accounting Model 2 (HAM2), "Annexe C | Indicateurs financiers: Définitions et calculs," version of January 31, 2025, accessed September 30, 2026, https://www.srs-cspcp.ch/sites/default/files/pages/2025-01-31-annexe-c-indicateurs-financiers_0.pdf: the self-financing ratio (self-financing × 100 ÷ net investment) is one of the three first-priority indicators.
22. United Nations, metadata sheet for SDG indicator 16.7.1 ("Proportions of positions in national and local institutions, including (a) the legislatures; (b) the public service; and (c) the judiciary, compared to national distributions, by sex, age, persons with disabilities and population groups"), accessed September 30, 2026, https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/metadata/files/Metadata-16-07-01a.pdf.
23. Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) 2023/1669 of June 16, 2023, supplementing Regulation (EU) 2017/1369 with regard to the energy labeling of smartphones and slate tablets, applicable from June 20, 2025 (art. 8); the label includes the "repairability class determined in accordance with Annex II" (Annex III, point VIII), from A (most favorable) to E, accessed September 30, 2026, https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg_del/2023/1669/oj.
24. ISO 30414:2025, *Human resource management — Requirements and recommendations for human capital reporting and disclosure*, 2nd ed. (Geneva: ISO, August 2025), https://www.iso.org/standard/30414 (reporting areas include "mobility and succession planning" and "skills, capabilities, and development"); it replaces ISO 30414:2018, *Human resource management — Guidelines for internal and external human capital reporting*, withdrawn on August 25, 2025, accessed September 30, 2026, https://www.iso.org/standard/69338.html.
25. OECD, *Better Life Index*, "Life Satisfaction" section, accessed September 30, 2026, https://www.oecdbetterlifeindex.org/topics/life-satisfaction/: overall satisfaction with life rated from 0 to 10.
26. United Nations, metadata sheet for SDG indicator 11.7.1 ("Average share of the built-up area of cities that is open space for public use for all, by sex, age and persons with disabilities"), accessed September 30, 2026, https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/metadata/files/Metadata-11-07-01.pdf.
27. Stiglitz, Sen, and Fitoussi, *Report*, executive summary, § 35, recommendation 11 ("Sustainability assessment requires a well-identified dashboard of indicators"), and § 36 (the analogy of a meter that would add up speed and fuel level).
28. Robert F. Kennedy, "Remarks at the University of Kansas," March 18, 1968, John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum, accessed September 30, 2026, https://www.jfklibrary.org/learn/about-jfk/the-kennedy-family/robert-f-kennedy/robert-f-kennedy-speeches/remarks-at-the-university-of-kansas-march-18-1968. See chapter 5, section 5.8.
29. Leo XIV, Encyclical Letter *Magnifica Humanitas* (May 15, 2026), no. 159, accessed October 16, 2026, https://www.vatican.va/content/leo-xiv/en/encyclicals/documents/20260515-magnifica-humanitas.html.
30. Federal Office for Spatial Development (ARE), "Cercle Indicateurs," accessed September 30, 2026, https://www.are.admin.ch/fr/cercleindicateurs-f. See chapter 14, section 14.4.
31. Ravi Chaudhry, *Capitalism to Peopleism: Inspiring a Leadership Transformation* (New Delhi: Simon & Schuster India, 2024), pp. 12 and 161 (paraphrase).
32. Chaudhry, *Capitalism to Peopleism*, p. 124.

CHAPTER 16

Conclusion: The Hour of the Catalysts—A Call to Accountability

> *"Responsible leadership is not just being held responsible for what we do, but also for what we do not do; being held responsible for not just what we say, but also for what we do not say."*
>
> — Ravi Chaudhry, *Capitalism to Peopleism*, 2024, p. 35[1]

Here we are, back at the pendulum.

At the beginning of this book, we looked at a world spinning out of control: crises that feed on one another, attention held captive, bonds coming undone, predators profiting from the disorder, a living world reaching its limits. We saw that this moment resembles what many traditions have called the end of an age, and that several scholarly readings of history recognize in it the critical phase of a cycle. We surveyed what economic thought has contributed and what it has missed. We sought, among the sages and the scientists, what a living balance means. And we proposed a theory—Equiconscism—with its three dimensions, its corridor of right measure, its seven principles, its five-movement cycle, and its ten questions.

What remains is the essential: moving from the page to the deed. This conclusion does not summarize the book. It asks a single question: **What are we going to do, now, with what we know?**

16.1 The Pendulum, One Last Time

Look at the image once more. The hand does not grip the string: if it did, the sphere would stop. Nor does it let go: if it did, the sphere would fall. It **accompanies**. It senses the amplitude, corrects a little, lets the swing run. That is what conscious balance is: neither total control, which freezes life, nor abandonment, which hands it over to the extremes.

Many of our institutions today swing between these two temptations. At times they want to plan everything, measure everything, lock everything down—and they suffocate. At other times they give up steering anything at all, in the name of the freedom of markets, of individuals, or of technologies—and they let the runaway take its course. Equiconscism proposes a third way, one that is no lukewarm compromise between the two: **conscious regulation**—attentive and differentiated—that accepts movement and refuses excess.

The pendulum does not choose its own amplitude. It obeys the forces acting upon it. But the hand can choose. That hand is yours.

16.2 The End of a Cycle Is Not Fate

In chapter 3, we defended a conviction: we are living through the final phase of a fourth age. The signs converge: the exhaustion of the story of unlimited growth, the fragmentation of societies, the return of the law of the strongest, a loss of meaning at the very heart of prosperity. Things will probably get worse before they get better. It would be dishonest to hide it.

But a cycle is not a law. The traditions that speak of the ages of the world do not describe a blind mechanism: they describe times in which human responsibility becomes decisive. The historians who read history in cycles do not say that the outcome is already written: they say that periods of crisis are precisely those in which small creative minorities—networks of determined people—can bend the course of events. Contemporary research on tipping points in social norms shows that a committed minority, once it reaches a critical mass, can overturn a convention shared by all (see chapter 3).

The end of a cycle is therefore a **threshold**. What comes next will not fall from the sky. It will be made of millions of ordinary decisions, taken in kitchens, workshops, offices, town halls, boardrooms, and parliaments. It is precisely at these levels—the micro and the meso—that Equiconscism seeks to be useful, as a complement to the great systemic visions, such as Ravi Chaudhry's Peopleism, that show where we need to go.

16.3 From Responsibility to Accountability

French has a fine word, *responsabilité*, which comes from the Latin *respondere*: to answer. But usage has often reduced it to a moral quality—"being responsible"—or to a legal category—"being held responsible." English distinguishes between *responsibility*, the burden one carries, and *accountability*, the obligation to **give an account** of how one has carried it. It is this second sense that this book seeks to place at the center—which is why, even in its original French, it uses the English word.

To be accountable is to accept four things:

1. **Saying what you intend to do**—a clear intention, put into words and shared (question 1, Meaning and Purpose).
2. **Saying to whom you will give an account**—not only to shareholders, voters, or superiors, but to all those whom the decision touches, including those absent: future generations, vulnerable people, the living world (questions 3 and 4).
3. **Measuring honestly**—with the scorecards, the indicators, and, above all, by listening to the people concerned (question 5 and chapter 14).
4. **Correcting**—acknowledging your mistakes, adjusting the amplitude, repairing what can be repaired (the fourth movement of the cycle: *Adjust*).

Accountability is not a punishment. It is a form of respect: toward those to whom we give an account, and toward ourselves. It is the fifth movement of the cycle of conscious balance—**Answer and Pass On**—and the seventh principle of Equiconscism: embraced responsibility. Without it, the finest intentions turn into speeches, and the finest indicators turn into "equi-washing."

In the age of artificial intelligence, this demand grows more pressing still. The more decisions we delegate to technical systems, the more vital it becomes that an identifiable human being can answer for them. This is the meaning of the second of the Ten Commandments of Equiconscist AI proposed in chapter 13.

16.4 Awakeners of Consciousness and Catalysts

Who will do this work? Not an elite. Not initiates. Not heroes.

The change this book calls for will be carried by ordinary people who agree to play, in their own setting, one of two roles (see chapter 3).

Awakeners of consciousness help others see what is at stake. They ask the question that habit had silenced: "Who have we not heard?" "What are we leaving as our legacy?" "Does this still nourish life?" They do so without talking down to anyone, because they ask themselves these questions first. It might be a teacher who opens a talking circle in her classroom, an apprentice who asks why we throw away what could be repaired, a nurse who points out that the pace being imposed is exhausting the teams, a municipal councilor who invites young people to the budget table.

Catalysts lower the threshold of the first step. As in chemistry, they do not force the reaction: they make it possible, and they come out of it unchanged, ready for the next one. It might be an executive who introduces decision by consent in her leadership team, a mayor who convenes a citizens' assembly, a craftsman who trains his successors, a parent who institutes screen-free meals, a foundation that funds a trial of an Equiconscist dashboard in a municipality.

Each of us can be both, at different moments. It takes neither title nor permission. It takes lucidity, a little courage, and the joy of acting together.

16.5 The Equiconscist Pledge

This book ends with a concrete invitation. Here is a pledge. It carries no legal weight; it carries the weight you give it. You can sign it on your own, as a family, as a team, as a board of directors, or as a municipal council—and then reread it in three months, giving an account of what you have done with it.

IN PRACTICE **The Equiconscist Pledge**

1. I will seek the deeper intention behind what I do, and ask whether it serves the living world and the common good.
2. I will bring my needs into harmony with those of others, of society, and of nature, without sacrificing myself or anyone else.
3. Before deciding, I will open my eyes: I will look for who is involved, who is affected, and who is absent.
4. I will listen more than I speak, and I will know when to be silent to make room for others.
5. I will seek right measure rather than the maximum—in what I consume, produce, own, and demand.
6. I will take into account the different needs of each person, without giving up our shared dignity.
7. I will share the power entrusted to me, and I will favor decisions made by consent.
8. I will strive to leave people, relationships, and the living world in better shape than I found them.
9. I will give an account of my commitments, acknowledge my mistakes, and correct them.
10. I will pass on what I have learned, and I will make sure that what I do nourishes joy, vitality, and beauty.

Place, date, signature(s): ..... Date of my first review: .....

16.6 An Open Book

Equiconscism is not finished. It never will be, since it is, by definition, a process. This white paper is a first formulation of it, offered under an open license so that others may carry it further: researchers who will want to test its hypotheses, practitioners who will improve its tools, translators who will carry it into other languages, and municipalities, businesses, and schools that will put it to the test and share the results. The website www.equiconscism.org (under construction) will welcome these contributions.

I do not know what the coming cycle will look like. No one does. But I do know that it will look like what we make of it. If it is true that all things beautiful are as difficult as they are rare, then conscious balance will be difficult. All the more reason to begin today, where we are, with what we have.

The hand is here. The pendulum is moving. It is up to us to accompany it.

In Brief

- The hand that holds the pendulum neither grips nor lets go: it **accompanies**. Conscious balance rejects both total control and abandonment to the extremes.
- The end of a cycle is not fate but a **threshold**: what comes next will depend on millions of ordinary decisions, made above all at the micro and meso levels.
- Accountability—**giving an account**—completes responsibility: saying what you intend to do and to whom you will answer for it, measuring honestly, correcting.

- Change will be carried not by an elite but by ordinary **awakeners of consciousness** and **catalysts**, present in every walk of life.
- The ten-point **Equiconscist Pledge** translates the ten key questions into personal and collective promises, to be reread and reviewed.
- Equiconscism is an **open book**: a process, offered under an open license, to be carried forward together.

Notes

1. Ravi Chaudhry, *Capitalism to Peopleism: Inspiring a Leadership Transformation* (New Delhi: Simon & Schuster India, 2024), p. 35.

APPENDICES

Tools and References

The Conscious Path, the scorecards, the correspondences, the glossary, the sources.

APPENDIX A

The Conscious Path: The Inner Journey in Five Stages

> *"se hace camino al andar"—"the path is made by walking" (our translation)*
>
> — Antonio Machado, *Campos de Castilla*, "Proverbios y cantares"[1]

Conscious balance cannot be decreed. Knowing the three dimensions, the seven principles, and the ten key questions is not enough to live them. Between what we know and what we do lies a path: that of the person who decides to connect their actions to what matters for them and for others. This book has said it several times: one cannot work lastingly for collective balance without having looked at one's own imbalances (see chapters 7 and 9).

The Conscious Path offers this journey in five stages: **The Call, The Exploration, The Alignment, The Crossing, The Handing On**. Designed by David Fiorucci in 2025 as an extension of his work supporting leaders, it first took the form of a booklet. This appendix presents a consolidated, pared-down version intended for everyone.

A.1 What the Conscious Path Is—and What It Is Not

The Conscious Path is a **journey of personal development and maturation**, compatible with all convictions, religious or not. It is neither a miracle method, nor a doctrine, nor an esoteric quest. It is "a pedagogy of presence, an art of slowing down in order to act better."[2]

Three clarifications set its framework.

- **It is not a linear program.** "It is not meant as a dogmatic or linear guide, but as an inner companionship. Each of the stages can be lived at its own pace, and sometimes even in a different order."[3] A person may live several stages at once, or return to one of them years later.
- **It is a cycle.** Like the cycle of conscious balance (Perceive, Listen, Discern, Adjust, Answer and Pass On), the Conscious Path never ends: the Handing On prepares a new Call, in oneself or in others.
- **It is not therapy.** This journey does not replace psychological, medical, or social support. If a stage brings significant suffering to the surface, it is wise and courageous to seek the support of a qualified person.

Recognized Foundations

The Conscious Path makes no claim to absolute originality. It belongs to a long tradition of observing human transitions, which it translates into simple language.

- **Rites of passage.** The anthropologist Arnold van Gennep showed in 1909 that life's passages follow, in many cultures, three phases: separation, margin, aggregation.[4] From this, William Bridges derived a three-phase reading of personal and professional transitions: an ending, a "neutral zone," a new beginning.[5]
- **Quest narratives.** In 1949, Joseph Campbell described the recurring structure of heroic narratives: the call, the ordeal, the return with a boon to share.[6] It can be recognized in the Call, the Crossing, and the Handing On.
- **The psychology of change.** James Prochaska and Carlo DiClemente's transtheoretical model describes the stages through which a person moves from no intention to sustained action;[7] Peter Gollwitzer's work shows that an intention phrased precisely ("when…, then I…") markedly increases the chances of acting on it.[8]
- **Developmental psychology.** Erik Erikson gave the name *generativity* to the adult need to contribute to what will outlive us;[9] Carl Rogers described *congruence* as the match between what one experiences, what one feels, and what one expresses;[10] Viktor Frankl placed the search for meaning at the heart of mental health.[11]
- **Reflective practice.** Expressive writing, studied by James Pennebaker, and reflective practice, as described by Donald Schön, show the value of writing and stepping back to turn experience into learning.[12]

A biblical narrative also offers an illuminating analogy, one that the encyclical *Magnifica Humanitas* proposes in connection with the rebuilding of Jerusalem: Nehemiah hears the cry of a wounded city, inspects the site in silence, organizes the work, faces opposition, and rebuilds together with the people (nos. 8 and 241).[13] This is not an identity but an echo: the five movements of the Conscious Path belong to shared human experience.

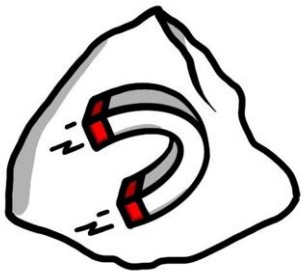
A Note on Sources

The first versions of the booklet opened with a sentence attributed to Aristotle: "Where your talents and the needs of the world meet, there lies your vocation." This attribution is **mistaken**. The sentence is a loose adaptation of a definition of vocation proposed by the American writer and theologian Frederick Buechner: "The place God calls you to is the place where your deep gladness and the world's deep hunger meet."[14] Other quotations circulating under famous names are not used here, for lack of a verifiable source.

A.2 The Path in Five Stages

Each stage is presented with the same structure: its **meaning**, **key questions** for exploring it, one or two **exercises**, the **signs** that the stage is being lived, and its **link to the ten key questions** of Equiconscism (see chapter 8).

Stage 1 — The Call



Stage 1 — The Call

Listening to what is asking to change.

Meaning. Every transformation begins with a signal. It may be clear or diffuse, joyful or painful. It often arises from unease: a sense of being out of step, a tiredness that does not go away, a question of meaning. The Call is neither an ambition nor a goal; it is the perception of a gap between what we do and what matters to us. "The call is not the destination, but the signal to set out. Still, one has to hear it… and answer it."[15]

The temptation is to silence it: through busyness, entertainment, or reason ("this isn't the right time"). The Call first asks for listening—the second movement of the cycle of conscious balance, turned toward oneself.

Common Signs.

- the feeling that "something has to change," without being able to explain it;
- persistent tiredness despite one's efforts;
- what once brought enthusiasm now leaves one indifferent;
- contradictory desires that blur decisions;
- a growing need to contribute, to be useful, to be genuine.

Key Questions.

- What do I sense is necessary, but have not yet dared to choose?
- When, in recent months, have I felt most alive, most useful, most at peace?
- Which of the world's sorrows touches me most deeply?

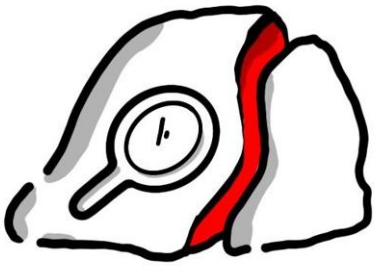
Exercises.

1. *The three voices of the Call.* In a quiet moment, write without correcting yourself, in three parts: what I can no longer bear (even if I still pretend); what I have never dared to say, but feel deeply; what I have always known, without fully owning it.
2. *The listening walk.* Walk alone for thirty minutes, without your phone, somewhere that does you good. Hold a single question inwardly: "What is asking to be born in my life?" When you return, write down what came to you, without rereading.

Sign That You Have Lived This Stage. You can name, in one or two sentences, what is calling you —even if you do not yet know how to answer it—and you have stopped pushing it away.

Link to the Ten Questions. Question 1, *Meaning and Purpose* (what is the deeper intention behind what I do?), and question 10, *Joy and Vitality* (the élan of life as a compass).

Stage 2 — The Exploration



Stage 2 — The Exploration

Looking within, with honesty and kindness.

Meaning. Answering the Call is not enough. We need to understand what, within us, holds the movement back: learned beliefs ("I don't deserve better," "you can't succeed and keep your integrity"), family or social loyalties ("people like us don't do that"), old fears (being rejected, not measuring up, being seen in one's vulnerability). To explore is to look at oneself with lucidity and tenderness, and to make peace with one's contradictions.

This stage is neither endless introspection, nor a quest for perfection, nor a trial of oneself. It is an encounter with what is. As chapter 7 recalled, widening the gaze begins with the ability to see what we would rather not see—within ourselves as well as around us.

Common Signs.

- the need to understand what is holding me back;
- patterns that repeat in spite of myself;
- difficulty naming my deeper needs;
- old emotions resurfacing.

Key Questions.

- What am I ready, at last, to face squarely?
- To what am I still loyal, at the expense of what I am called to become?
- What, precisely, am I afraid of if I answer the Call?

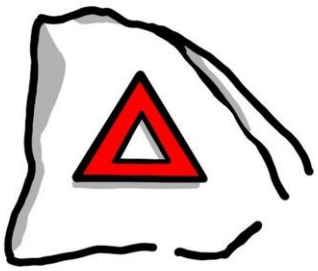
Exercises.

1. *The map of loyalties.* On a sheet of paper, draw three columns: my family; the groups I belong to (country, background, profession, community); my younger self. In each, note the values, unspoken rules, and prohibitions that have shaped how you see. Then mark in one color what holds you back today, and in another what you want to honor differently.
2. *The unsent letter.* Write a letter to someone important or to a part of yourself, saying what you have kept to yourself. You will not send it. Keep it or destroy it: the act of writing is what matters.

Sign That You Have Lived This Stage. You can name at least one belief or loyalty that holds you back, without judging yourself, and you know what you want to keep of it and what you want to transform.

Link to the Ten Questions. Question 2, *Inner / Outer Balance* (bringing my needs into harmony with those of others presupposes knowing them), and question 6, *Timing and Cycles* (recognizing where I am in my own cycle).

Stage 3 — The Alignment



Stage 3 — The Alignment

Connecting what I think, what I feel, and what I do.

Meaning. Having taken stock, the task is now to adjust. The Alignment is the moment when the head (vision), the heart (values), and the body (actions) come into harmony—what Carl Rogers called congruence and what the SALTER guide (SALTER® — *La boussole consciente pour un monde en mutation* [SALTER®: The conscious compass for a changing world]) sums up this way: "what I think, I say; what I say, I do."[16] The Alignment is neither an ideal of perfection nor a rigid posture: it is a movement toward greater authenticity, constantly self-correcting, just as the pendulum swings back toward the center without ever freezing there.

This stage has a collective reach. An organization cannot be more coherent than the people who lead it. There is no lasting social justice without personal rightness.

Common Signs.

- a pull between what I say, what I think, and what I do;
- the feeling of playing a role;
- choices dictated by what others expect;
- difficulty setting boundaries.

Key Questions.

- What am I doing, or accepting, today that is no longer in keeping with who I am?
- What are my three core values, and where do they show up in my calendar?
- What action, today, would honor the person I have become?

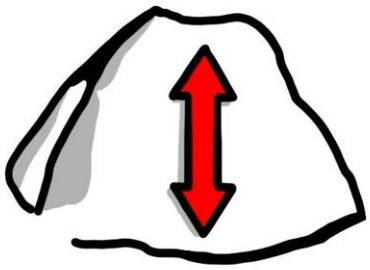
Exercises.

1. *The three circles.* Draw three overlapping circles: what I think, what I feel, what I do. In each, note what drives you today. Spot the dissonances and choose **one** concrete adjustment for the week.
2. *The tree of values.* Draw a tree: in the roots, what has nourished you, even in adversity; in the trunk, your fundamental values; in the foliage, the concrete actions through which you want to embody them. For each branch, note one small daily action.

Sign That You Have Lived This Stage. You have taken at least one coherent step that cost you something—saying no, changing a habit, speaking a truth—and you feel less inner fatigue at being yourself.

Link to the Ten Questions. Question 2, *Inner / Outer Balance*, and question 9, *Legacy and Example* (already demonstrating, in the way one acts, what one wants to pass on).

Stage 4 — The Crossing



Stage 4 — The Crossing

Moving beyond "I'm still getting ready" to act with rightness.

Meaning. Then comes the moment to dare. To cross is to move from intention to action, from plan to presence, accepting uncertainty. This stage is often frightening, because it exposes us. It cannot be delegated, but it can be accompanied. Crossing does not mean forcing: it means acknowledging one's fear without handing it the helm.

The forms of resistance are well known: waiting for "the right moment" or "the right version of oneself," taking course after course without ever taking the plunge, still seeking outside validation, hiding behind obligations or false modesty. The SALTER guide links them to the fracture of **Evasion**, whose lever is **Responsibility**: "Not deciding is a decision. It is simply that no one owns it."[17]

The Crossing is also the stage of resilience: it turns hardship into learning, and learning into commitment.

Common Signs.

- I put off acting on the pretext that I am not ready;
- fear of failure or of judgment holds me back;
- I stay with what is familiar, even though it no longer suits me.

Key Questions.

- What am I still putting off out of caution, even though I know the time has come?
- What part of myself am I ready to leave behind?
- What is the smallest possible first step, this week?

Exercises.

1. *The written commitment.* Complete the sentence: "Today, I choose to cross…" (a fear, a limit, a decision). Then phrase a commitment in one precise, dated sentence: "When [situation], I will [action]." Sign it, read it aloud, and reread it every day for a week.
2. *The first step.* Within seventy-two hours, take one concrete action, however modest, that commits you to your decision: a call, an appointment, a letter, a registration. Then note what you felt before, during, and after.

Sign That You Have Lived This Stage. You have acted despite your fear, and you have found that action, even imperfect, taught you more than preparation did.

Link to the Ten Questions. Question 5, *Shared Responsibility* (taking on one's share and making it visible), and question 7, *Power and Consent* (reclaiming the power to act in one's own life, free of coercion or inertia).

Stage 5 — The Handing On



Stage 5 — The Handing On

Letting what has passed through me pass on.

Meaning. A transformation is never for oneself alone. What we have understood and lived through can become a resource for others. To hand on is not to impose, nor to preach, nor to set oneself up as a model: it is to offer the fruit of a journey, through example, presence, and words, and then to leave others free to make something else of it. This is what Erikson called generativity.

The Handing On is also a letting go: I give, I sow, and I give up controlling the outcome. It is addressed not to "disciples" but to peers. It joins the fifth movement of the cycle of conscious balance—Answer and Pass On—and prepares, in oneself or in others, a new Call.

Common Signs.

- a desire to contribute, without knowing how;
- a tendency to downplay what I have to offer;

- the fear of imposing;
- the feeling that the time has come to share.

Key Questions.

- What do I have to hand on that no longer belongs to me?
- What am I ready to offer, even without knowing who will receive it?
- Who around me is at the stage of the Call today?

Exercises.

1. *The letter to those who will come after.* Begin with: "To you who will carry on what I have begun…" Write down a lesson, a realization, a value you wish to bequeath. End with: "And now I leave you free to do it in your own way."
2. *The sharing circle.* Bring together a few friends, family members, or colleagues. Each person shares, in a few minutes, a lesson, a commitment, or a question. The others listen without commenting. End with a moment of silence.

Sign That You Have Lived This Stage. Someone has made their own, in their own way, something you shared—and that gladdens you more than any recognition you might gain from it.

Link to the Ten Questions. Question 9, *Legacy and Example* (what do we want to leave as our legacy?), and question 4, *Inclusion and Listening* (making room for others, knowing when to be silent).

A.3 Overview

Stage	Inner Movement	Central Key Question	Main Exercise	Equiconscism's Key Questions	Movement of the Cycle
1. The Call	Listening to what is asking to change	What do I sense is necessary, but have not yet dared to choose?	The three voices of the Call	1 Meaning and Purpose; 10 Joy and Vitality	Perceive
2. The Exploration	Looking within	What am I ready, at last, to face squarely?	The map of loyalties	2 Inner / Outer Balance; 6 Timing and Cycles	Listen
3. The Alignment	Connecting thinking, feeling, and acting	What am I doing, or accepting, that is no longer in keeping with who I am?	The three circles	2 Inner / Outer Balance; 9 Legacy and Example	Discern
4. The Crossing	Taking action despite fear	What am I still putting off out of caution, even though I know the time has come?	The written commitment	5 Shared Responsibility; 7 Power and Consent	Adjust
5. The Handing On	Offering and leaving others free	What do I have to hand on that no longer belongs to me?	The letter to those who will come after	9 Legacy and Example; 4 Inclusion and Listening	Answer and Pass On

The correspondence with the cycle of conscious balance is indicative: the Conscious Path is its inner, personal version; the cycle is the version that applies to any decision, individual or collective.

A.4 Where Am I? A Self-Assessment

For each statement, give a score from 1 (not at all true for me) to 5 (completely true for me). Add up the four scores for each stage (a total of 4 to 20).

Stage	Statements
The Call	I feel a need for change or realignment. — I know what I no longer want, even if I do not yet know what I want. — I can name what is calling me. — I have stopped putting this question off.
The Exploration	I know some of the patterns or fears that hold me back. — I can look at my shadow sides without judging myself. — I can identify the loyalties that limit me. — I have begun a process of clarification.
The Alignment	I feel a coherence between what I think, feel, and do. — My decisions increasingly reflect my values. — I know how to set boundaries. — I take care of my body, my emotions, and my mind.
The Crossing	I act, even imperfectly, to make real what is calling me. — My fear no longer decides for me. — I no longer wait to understand everything before moving forward. — I own my path, even if it is unusual.
The Handing On	I want to share what I have learned. — I am letting go of the need for recognition or control. — My action contributes to something greater than myself. — I can see how my path can serve the wider community.

Reading the Results. From 4 to 9: stage to open. From 10 to 15: active stage, which still needs attention. From 16 to 20: integrated stage, which can become a source of support for others. This self-assessment is not a psychological test: it is a snapshot, to be repeated every six months. As on the Ten-Question Scorecard (see chapter 8), a high score is favorable here—the reverse of the SALTER scale, on which a high score signals an intense fracture.

A.5 How to Live the Conscious Path

- **Alone, with a notebook.** Devote two to four weeks to each stage, keeping a journal. The 30-day journey (see chapter 14) can provide a rhythm.
- **In pairs.** A trusted peer who listens without advising helps you keep the commitments made during the Crossing.
- **In a group or an organization.** Circles of four to eight people can live the stages together, meeting once a month. In a leadership team, the Conscious Path is a useful companion to an Equiconscist initiative or a SALTER diagnosis: collective transformations hold better when those who lead them have walked, for themselves, the path they ask of others.
- **With professional support**, when the path touches old wounds or weighty decisions.

No stage is "higher" than the others; no person is "further along" than another. Anyone, at any age and in any situation, can hear a Call, explore, align, cross, and hand on. This is how conscious balance passes from the person to the family, from the team to the organization, from the municipality to society: not by decree, but through ordinary women and men who, one day, took the first step.

Notes

1. Antonio Machado, *Campos de Castilla*, "Proverbios y cantares," in the expanded editions of the collection (the poem does not appear in the original edition, Madrid: Renacimiento, 1912, whose "Proverbios y cantares" series ends at no. XXVIII) ("Caminante, son tus huellas / el camino y nada más; / caminante, no hay camino, / se hace camino al andar").
2. David Fiorucci, *La Voie Consciente — Un parcours en 5 étapes pour incarner sa transformation et œuvrer avec justesse*, booklet (Biel/Bienne: LP3 AG / SA, 2025), introduction and stage 1 (the so-called "final" version). The exercises in this appendix consolidate that version and the LP3 version of July 22, 2025. The phrase "a pedagogy of presence, an art of slowing down in order to act better" comes from David Fiorucci, working document "Équiconscisme" (2025).
3. David Fiorucci, *La Voie Consciente — Un parcours en 5 étapes pour incarner sa transformation et œuvrer avec justesse*, booklet (Biel/Bienne: LP3 AG / SA, 2025), introduction and stage 1 (the so-called "final" version). The exercises in this appendix consolidate that version and the LP3 version of July 22, 2025. The phrase "a pedagogy of presence, an art of slowing down in order to act better" comes from David Fiorucci, working document "Équiconscisme" (2025).
4. Arnold van Gennep, *Les Rites de passage* (Paris: Émile Nourry, 1909).
5. William Bridges, *Transitions: Making Sense of Life's Changes* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1980).
6. Joseph Campbell, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1949); French trans. *Le Héros aux mille et un visages*.
7. James O. Prochaska and Carlo C. DiClemente, "Stages and Processes of Self-Change of Smoking: Toward an Integrative Model of Change," *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology* 51, no. 3 (1983): pp. 390–395.
8. Peter M. Gollwitzer, "Implementation Intentions: Strong Effects of Simple Plans," *American Psychologist* 54, no. 7 (1999): pp. 493–503.
9. Erik H. Erikson, *Childhood and Society* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1950); French trans. *Enfance et société*.
10. Carl R. Rogers, *On Becoming a Person* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1961); French trans. *Le Développement de la personne*.
11. Viktor E. Frankl, *Ein Psycholog erlebt das Konzentrationslager* (Vienna: Verlag für Jugend und Volk, 1946) (reissued under the title *… trotzdem Ja zum Leben sagen*, Munich: Kösel, 1977); expanded English edition *Man's Search for Meaning*; French trans. *Découvrir un sens à sa vie* (Montréal: Éditions de l'Homme, 1988).
12. James W. Pennebaker and Sandra K. Beall, "Confronting a Traumatic Event: Toward an Understanding of Inhibition and Disease," *Journal of Abnormal Psychology* 95, no. 3 (1986): pp. 274–281; Donald A. Schön, *The Reflective Practitioner* (New York: Basic Books, 1983).
13. Leo XIV, Encyclical Letter *Magnifica Humanitas* (May 15, 2026), nos. 8 and 241 (paraphrase), accessed October 16, 2026, https://www.vatican.va/content/leo-xiv/en/encyclicals/documents/20260515-magnifica-humanitas.html; Nehemiah 2–6.
14. Frederick Buechner, *Wishful Thinking: A Theological ABC* (New York: Harper & Row, 1973), s.v. "Vocation"; text reproduced, accessed September 30, 2026, https://www.frederickbuechner.com/quote-of-the-day/2017/7/18/vocation.
15. David Fiorucci, *La Voie Consciente — Un parcours en 5 étapes pour incarner sa transformation et œuvrer avec justesse*, booklet (Biel/Bienne: LP3 AG / SA, 2025), introduction and stage 1 (the so-called "final" version). The exercises in this appendix consolidate that version and the LP3 version of July 22, 2025. The phrase "a pedagogy of presence, an art of slowing down in order to act better" comes from David Fiorucci, working document "Équiconscisme" (2025).
16. David Fiorucci, *SALTER® — La boussole consciente pour un monde en mutation* (Biel/Bienne: LP3 AG / SA, 2026), chap. 7, "L — Labilité" (congruence), and chap. 9, "E — Évitement," key sentence, p. 40.
17. David Fiorucci, *SALTER® — La boussole consciente pour un monde en mutation* (Biel/Bienne: LP3 AG / SA, 2026), chap. 7, "L — Labilité" (congruence), and chap. 9, "E — Évitement," key sentence, p. 40.

APPENDIX B

Scorecards and Tools

This appendix brings together the four practical tools of Equiconscism: the Ten-Question Scorecard (B.1), the Stakeholder Scorecard (B.2), the step-by-step workshop that puts them to work (B.3), and the "Widening the Gaze" worksheet (B.4). Together they form the triptych described in chapter 8: *reflection* (the questions), *measurement* (the Ten-Question Scorecard), and *dialogue* (the Stakeholder Scorecard). How to use them in a complete process is presented in chapter 14.

Like the rest of this white paper, these tools are published under the CC BY-NC-SA 4.0 license: you may copy, adapt, and translate them for noncommercial use, provided you cite the source. They are neither a validated psychometric test nor an instrument for evaluating individuals: they are mirrors meant to open a conversation.

B.1 The Ten-Question Scorecard

Subject observed: ..... (a person, a team, an organization, a project, a community) **Period covered:** the last ..... months **Date:** .....

No.	Key Question	Statement to Assess	Score	Observations / Priority Actions
1	Meaning and Purpose	Our deeper intention is clear and shared, and it truly serves the living world and the common good.	☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☐5	
2	Inner / Outer Balance	Our needs and those of others, of society, and of nature are in harmony, without exhaustion or withdrawal.	☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☐5	
3	Overall Impact	Our choices take into account their ecological, social, economic, and cultural consequences, in the short, medium, and long term.	☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☐5	
4	Inclusion and Listening	The people concerned, including minority and absent ones, are heard and truly influence the decision.	☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☐5	

No.	Key Question	Statement to Assess	Score	Observations / Priority Actions
5	Shared Responsibility	Everyone knows and takes on their share; responsibilities are visible and followed up.	☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☐5	
6	Timing and Cycles	The rhythm of action respects the phase of the cycle (germination, growth, maturity, transition).	☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☐5	
7	Power and Consent	Decision-making domains are clear; collective decisions are made by consent, not through coercion or inertia.	☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☐5	
8	Regenerative Innovation	What we create repairs or regenerates natural and human resources, going beyond "destroying less."	☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☐5	
9	Legacy and Example	The legacy we want to leave has been thought through and is already embodied in what we do.	☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☐5	
10	Joy and Vitality	Our actions nourish joy, the élan of life, and beauty, and not merely performance.	☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☐5	
		Average (sum ÷ 10)	.....	

The statements summarize the canonical wordings of the ten questions, given in full in chapter 8. If the meaning of a statement is in doubt, the canonical wording prevails.

Scoring. 1 = Needs strengthening (absent or very weak) · 2 = Weak · 3 = Moderate · 4 = Good · 5 = Fully integrated.

Reading the average.

Average	Zone	Reading	Direction
1–2	**Alert**	Conscious balance is very weak.	In-depth review; a few quick corrective actions, including one that lightens the load.
2.1–3	**Transition**	Awareness is awakening, but inconsistent.	Choose the two or three lowest-scoring questions; targeted plan.
3.1–4	**Emergence**	Good commitment; some areas remain fragile.	Consolidate practices; make the assessment regular.
4.1–5	**Balance**	Equiconscism is actively embodied.	Stay the course; share practices; support other actors.

> **FOCUS Caution: Two Scales Running in Opposite Directions**
>
> On the Ten-Question Scorecard **a high score is favorable** (5 = fully integrated); on the SALTER scale the reverse is true: **a high score signals an intense fracture** (1 = zone of lucidity, 5 = silent crisis). If you use both tools, say so on every document and every chart.

Four reading rules.

1. **The floor before the average.** Any question scored 1 calls for action, whatever the average: a breached floor cannot be offset by a ceiling reached elsewhere. In a group, a question whose average is below 2 is treated the same way (see the Conscious Balance Index, chapter 15).
2. **Gaps before scores.** In a group, when the scores for a given question span three points or more (for example, from 2 to 5), discuss this disagreement first: it reveals different experiences of the same reality.
3. **The trend before the snapshot.** Repeat the scorecard every three to six months (or every year for an individual) and compare.
4. **A mirror, never a ranking.** Never link the results to pay, to an individual performance review, or to a ranking of teams.

The radar. Draw ten axes radiating from a single center, numbered 1 to 10 clockwise and graduated from 1 (near the center) to 5 (at the edge). Plot each score on its axis and join the points. Overlay, in another color, the outline from the previous session or that of the stakeholders (see B.2). Read the shapes, not the area: a star shape signals an imbalance between dimensions; a regular shape, a balance between them—and its size, the level reached.

How to use.

- *Individual*: quarterly or annual self-assessment, in ten minutes; note one action for the lowest-scoring question.
- *Collective*: each participant scores alone and anonymously; the facilitator calculates the average and the range of scores for each question; the discussion focuses on the gaps (see B.3).
- *Follow-up*: keep the dated scorecards and radars so that you can observe how scores and comments evolve over time.

B.2 The Stakeholder Scorecard

This scorecard gathers the perceptions of the people who experience an initiative, a project, or a policy: employees, beneficiaries, customers, partners, suppliers, residents. It complements the self-assessment of scorecard B.1 with the view of others.

Project or initiative assessed: ..... **Your connection to this project:** ☐ team ☐ beneficiary ☐ partner ☐ resident of the area ☐ other: ..... **Date:** .....

For each statement, indicate how far you agree: 1 = strongly disagree · 2 = somewhat disagree · 3 = mixed · 4 = somewhat agree · 5 = strongly agree. If you cannot answer, leave the box blank.

No.	Dimension	Statement	Score	Link to the Ten Questions
1	Clarity of purpose	The purpose of the project was explained to me; I understand it and share it.	☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☐5	Q1
2	Active participation	I was able to express myself, be listened to, and influence some decisions.	☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☐5	Q4, Q7
3	Inclusion and diversity	All voices, including minority ones, were taken into account.	☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☐5	Q4
4	Decision-making process	The ways of deciding (consent, transparency) were fair and effective.	☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☐5	Q5, Q7
5	Balance of the three dimensions	The project takes into account the economy, people, and the living world together, without sacrificing any one to the others.	☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☐5	Q2, Q3, Q8
6	Personal impact	This initiative has helped me grow (skills, awareness, well-being).	☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☐5	Q8, Q10
7	Collective impact	I see a real benefit for the community or the organization.	☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☐5	Q3
8	Quality of relationships	The climate was one of trust, cooperation, and mutual respect.	☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☐5	Q2, Q10
9	Durability	I believe the results will last and will be able to evolve over time.	☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☐5	Q6, Q9
10	Overall satisfaction	All in all, I am satisfied with this project.	☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☐5	—

Two open questions.

- What in this project should absolutely be kept?
- Who or what was forgotten, and what should be changed first?

Reading the average.

Average	Reading	Direction
1–2	**Alert**: major dissatisfaction.	In-depth listening and a thorough readjustment before any further step.
2.1–3	**Transition**: fragile commitment.	Identify the lowest-scoring dimensions and respond to them visibly.

Average	Reading	Direction
3.1–4	**Solid**: reasonable satisfaction.	Reinforce strengths, address weaknesses, share practices.
4.1–5	**Exemplary**: the project is perceived as aligned, durable, and inspiring.	Document and pass on; check that those absent are also represented.

How to use.

- *When*: midway through, to adjust; at the end of the project; then three to six months later, to measure the lasting effect.
- *Who*: all direct stakeholders and, if possible, people or organizations that represent those absent (nature conservation groups, youth councils, patients' or tenants' associations).
- *How*: guarantee anonymity (at least five responses per group before reporting any results by group); calculate the overall average and the average for each dimension; analyze the gaps between groups of respondents; read every comment.
- *Then*: tell respondents what you have taken away and what you are going to do. A consultation without feedback destroys more trust than it creates.
- *Compare*: the "Link to the Ten Questions" column makes it possible to set these results beside those of scorecard B.1. Where the self-assessment is markedly more favorable than the stakeholders' perception (a gap of one point or more), there is probably a blind spot.

B.3 The Equiconscism Workshop, Step by Step

Preparation.

- *Participants*: 3 to 20 people (a team, committee, board, partners, citizens).
- *Duration*: 60 to 90 minutes for a first session; half a day if it includes presenting the results of the Stakeholder Scorecard and preparing actions.
- *Roles*: a neutral facilitator, ideally from outside the direct chain of command; a timekeeper; a note-taker.
- *Materials*: the ten questions (chapter 8), one B.1 scorecard per participant, the results of scorecard B.2 if it was administered beforehand, a large blank radar on the wall, pencils in two colors.
- *Beforehand*: administer scorecard B.2 to stakeholders two to four weeks before the workshop; prepare worksheet B.4.

Step	Duration	Process	Outcome
0. Opening	5 min	Reminder of the purpose, the scope, and the ground rules: individual scores are confidential, no one is judged for what they say, and people speak from experience rather than opinion.	Shared frame

Step	Duration	Process	Outcome
1. Individual reflection	15–20 min	Each person reads the ten questions, scores each line of scorecard B.1 alone (from 1 to 5), and writes one observation per question.	Ten scores per person
2. Collective sharing	20–30 min	Scores are recorded anonymously; the facilitator draws the average radar and points out the gaps. A round: each person names one strength and one area to strengthen. Discussion of the gaps: why such different perceptions? What are the root causes?	Collective radar; two or three gaps understood
3. Listening to stakeholders	20–30 min	Presentation of the results of scorecard B.2; the two radars overlaid; reading of selected comments; worksheet B.4 updated. Question: what are we hearing that we did not see?	Blind spots identified
4. Action plan	15 min	Choice of two or three actions at most, by consent: preferably one that strengthens inner / outer balance, one that improves inclusion or dialogue, and one that increases regenerative impact. For each: a responsible person, a deadline, a success criterion.	Action plan
5. Closing	5 min	A brief round: a moment of gratitude, satisfaction, or learning. Date of the next session.	Momentum and commitment

Follow-up.

- Frequency: every three to six months.
- At each session, compare the new scores and radars with those of the previous session, and begin by reviewing the actions that were decided.
- Tell stakeholders what was done with their input.

Facilitation tips.

- *Neutrality*: make sure every voice is heard, especially the quietest; let those higher in the hierarchy speak last.
- *Consent*: for the action plan, prefer decision by consent (no reasoned objection) to a majority vote; welcome each objection as information.
- *Lightening the load*: if the group is saturated, the first action should take something away (a meeting, a report, a procedure) before adding anything.

- *Symbolism*: place a simple object in the middle of the table—for example, a small wooden ruler and three pebbles that have to be arranged to find the point where everything holds; it is a tangible reminder that balance has to be sought and re-created.
- *Limits*: the workshop is neither a therapy session nor a staff appraisal. If serious conflicts or significant distress come to light, address them in an appropriate setting.

B.4 The "Widening the Gaze" Worksheet: Involved, Affected, Absent

Before any important decision, this worksheet helps you **look beyond your own navel**: to identify all those, human and non-human, present and yet to come, whom the decision touches. It can be used alone in ten minutes, or in a group at the start of a workshop.

Decision or project under review: .....

	Involved	Affected	Absent
Definition	Those who take part in the decision or in carrying it out.	Those who will feel its effects, directly or indirectly.	Those who cannot make their voices heard.
Questions to identify them	Who decides? Who pays? Who carries it out? Who can block it?	Who wins, who loses? Who will bear the hidden costs? Where, and when?	Who will never be in the room? Who is not yet born? Who does not speak our language?
Examples	Management, teams, board, funders, authorities, partners	Customers, users, local residents, suppliers and their employees, neighboring municipalities	Future generations, animals, ecosystems, water, soils; vulnerable or distant people, or those without the right to vote
Your answers	.....	Direct: ..... Indirect:	.....
How to include them?	Clear roles and decision-making domains (Q5, Q7)	Listening that influences the decision: circles, scorecard B. 2 (Q4)	Spokespersons, expert input, long-term indicators (Q3, Q6, Q8)

The circle map. Draw three concentric circles around the decision (see chapter 7): in the center, those involved; in the second circle, those affected, marking direct effects with a solid line and indirect effects with a dotted line; in the outer circle, those absent. For each absent party, note who could carry their voice, and connect them with a line. The empty areas of the map are often the most revealing.

The five gestures of widening the gaze. Before closing the worksheet, check that you have carried them out.

☐ **Opening one's eyes**: have I looked beyond the obvious actors, in space and in time?

☐ **Opening one's arms**: have I invited those I never invite?

☐ **Opening one's heart**: have I put myself in the place of the person most affected?

☐ **Listening**: have I heard directly from at least one affected person, rather than speaking on their behalf?

☐ **Knowing when to be silent**: have I given others the space to say what I did not want to hear?

Three closing questions.

1. What person, group, or living being have I discovered thanks to this worksheet?
2. What does this change about my decision?
3. How will I give an account to those whom the decision touches?

This worksheet prepares questions 3 (Overall Impact) and 4 (Inclusion and Listening), and feeds the first movement of the cycle of conscious balance: **Perceive**.

APPENDIX C

Correspondences

This appendix gathers into a few tables the correspondences drawn throughout the book between Equiconscism and four external points of reference: Ravi Chaudhry's Peopleism, Leo XIV's encyclical *Magnifica Humanitas*, the SALTER guide, and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It is meant as a working tool: for preparing a workshop, linking a sustainability report to the ten key questions, or engaging in dialogue with people who recognize themselves in one or another of these frameworks.

> **FOCUS Convergences of Criteria, Not Endorsements**
>
> The tables that follow identify **convergences of criteria** between texts that arose from different horizons. They do not mean that Ravi Chaudhry, the Holy See, or the United Nations endorses Equiconscism, nor the reverse. Each text keeps its own foundation: a system of governance to be instituted, for Peopleism (mainly at the macro level); a Christian anthropology, for *Magnifica Humanitas*; a diagnostic instrument, for SALTER; an intergovernmental program, for the SDGs. Equiconscism, a nondenominational theory, is situated mainly at the meso and micro levels (see chapters 5 and 7).

Conventions.

- **Ravi Chaudhry**: printed page numbers of *Capitalism to Peopleism: Inspiring a Leadership Transformation* (New Delhi: Simon & Schuster India, 2024; hardcover edition, ISBN 978-81-972789-4-5), and the article "Our economy has been living in an Adam Smith world since 1776. Something different is coming," *Fortune*, March 22, 2026. Quotations are given in Ravi Chaudhry's original English; the fuller passages appear in the notes to chapters 5, 7, 8, and 9.
- ***Magnifica Humanitas***: Leo XIV, encyclical letter of May 15, 2026, cited by paragraph number (no.), from the official English text published on vatican.va, accessed October 16, 2026, https://www.vatican.va/content/leo-xiv/en/encyclicals/documents/20260515-magnifica-humanitas.html.
- **SALTER**: levers from the guide *SALTER® — La boussole consciente pour un monde en mutation* [SALTER®: The conscious compass for a changing world] (2026), in their canonical version (see chapter 2); the links with the ten questions are those given in chapter 8.
- **SDGs**: numbering of United Nations General Assembly resolution A/RES/70/1 (September 25, 2015). The correspondences with the SDGs are **our own proposals**, offered as an indication only: the goals are "integrated and indivisible" (§ 18), and almost every question touches several of them.

- The strength of each link is qualified with caution: *strong*, *partial*, *weak*. Where one of the texts is silent on a point, we say so rather than force the parallel.

C.1 The Three Dimensions and the Hand That Links Them

Equiconscism	Peopleism (Ravi Chaudhry)	*Magnifica Humanitas*	SALTER	Main SDGs
A measured and shared economy	The triad "capital, people and nature" (p. 142); "The Wisdom Economy understands the concept of 'enough'" (p. 110); moving from the "need to have" to the "need to share" (p. 157); growth through "surge-up" rather than trickle-down (p. 163); capital that "functions as a means rather than a master" (*Fortune*)	Economic freedom "is not absolute; it must always be measured against the common good and the dignity of every person" (no. 157); growth that becomes "inclusive from the outset" (no. 158); metrics complementary to GDP (no. 159); finance in the service of development (no. 160)	Clarity (telling the essential from the urgent); Responsibility	1, 8, 10, 12
An inclusive society built on solidarity	Definition of Peopleism: a system of governance that "sensitively collates and meets the collective aspirations of all citizens" (p. 16); "democratizing democracy" (p. 146); "neither a leftist nor a rightist ideology" (p. 156)	The common good, "the social expression of the dignity recognized in every person" (no. 59); subsidiarity and solidarity inseparable (no. 73); solidarity as "a conscious choice" (no. 74)	Co-creation; Resonance	1, 3, 4, 5, 10, 11, 16
A respected and regenerated living world	Being a "Peopleist" and a "Natureist" as well (p. 143); entrepreneurship that does not make money "at the cost of nature" (p. 173); an economy aligned with "the patterns and principles of a living system," in John Fullerton's words (p. 218)	The universal destination of the earth's goods—soil, water, air—for present and future generations (no. 65); no "true progress" that degrades ecosystems (no. 84); the energy and water footprint of AI (no. 101). The vocabulary of "regeneration" is absent from the encyclical	No dedicated lever: see questions 3 and 8 (Embodied Presence; "regenerative" level of the maturity model)	2, 6, 7, 13, 14, 15
Consciousness, the hand that holds the pendulum	"awareness helps us strike a 'balance'" between conflicting demands (p. 124); wisdom as "knowledge enlivened by awareness": the ABC of Awareness, Bridge-Building, Compassion (p. 136); exercising every choice "consciously" (p. 107)	A "frequent imbalance between the speed of technological growth and the slower development of awareness" (no. 106); solidarity as "a conscious choice" (no. 74)	All six levers; in particular Inner Anchoring and Embodied Presence	Target 4.7 (education for sustainable development)

Reading. Ravi Chaudhry's triad (capital, people, nature) and the three dimensions of Equiconscism overlap almost term for term. The difference lies in how they are held together: Ravi Chaudhry proposes that people and nature take precedence over capital; Equiconscism seeks a differentiated balance among the three, with capital remaining a means in the service of the other two (chapter 7, section 7.13). *Magnifica Humanitas* links the three domains without using this division; its key notion is the accepted **limit**, whereas that of Equiconscism is **dynamic balance**—two complementary notions that no. 113 brings together.

C.2 The Ten Key Questions

Key Question	Peopleism (Ravi Chaudhry)	*Magnifica Humanitas*	SALTER Lever (Chapter 8)	SDGs
1. Meaning and Purpose	"the fundamental purpose of the economy is to serve society" (p. 112); asking the right questions, then "questioning the questions" (p. 9)	"Where are we going? Toward what goal do we wish to orient ourselves?" (no. 6)	S — Saturation → **Clarity**	All the SDGs, "integrated and indivisible"
2. Inner / Outer Balance	A balance "between diverse, conflicting demands" (p. 124); the leader's "inner agility" (p. 36)	"without a proper balance between work, leisure and rest, families are weakened" (no. 169); "a genuinely healthy attitude […] requiring rhythms that incorporate silence" (no. 146)	L — Lability → **Inner Anchoring**	3, 8
3. Overall Impact	Exercising every choice "with full awareness of its intentional and unintentional impact on everyone else" (p. 107); the "720-degree view" (p. 123)	"The assessment of human and social impact" (no. 14); no progress achieved by "shifting costs onto the most disadvantaged communities, or compromising the living conditions of those who will follow us" (no. 84); AI's footprint (no. 101)	A — Artificiality → **Embodied Presence**	12, 13, 15
4. Inclusion and Listening	Listening to "the views that are not articulated" (p. 57); "Ask people what they want" (p. 131)	Decisions "made at the closest level possible to the persons involved," so that "people can participate in the decision-making process" (no. 70); "Adopting the perspective of victims" (heading of nos. 216–217)	T — Tribalism → **Co-creation**	5, 10, 16 (target 16.7)

Key Question	Peopleism (Ravi Chaudhry)	*Magnifica Humanitas*	SALTER Lever (Chapter 8)	SDGs
5. Shared Responsibility	Being held responsible for what we do and for what we do not do (p. 35); feeling "fully accountable" for how money is made (p. 173)	"No one can single-handedly bear the weight of the challenges the world is facing" (no. 13); "no one is without responsibility" (no. 212)	E — Evasion → **Responsibility**	12 (target 12.6), 16 (target 16.6), 17
6. Timing and Cycles	"a balance between short-term imperatives and long-term sustainability" (p. 162)	"[I]nitiating good processes and enabling them to mature" (no. 25); a critique of "short-term calculations" (no. 63). The encyclical supports no cyclical reading of history: in it, the present is not "a predetermined fate" (no. 210)	L — Lability → **Inner Anchoring**	12, 13; Declaration on Future Generations (2024)
7. Power and Consent	Good governance emerges from "the acquisition of the capacity by all to resist authority when it is abused" (p. 146); rejection of majoritarianism (p. 165)	"only an apparent consensus" (no. 56); "A more moral AI is not enough if that morality is determined by a few" (no. 107)	T — **Co-creation** and E — **Responsibility**	5 (target 5.5), 10 (target 10.2), 16 (target 16.7)
8. Regenerative Innovation	An economy aligned with "the patterns and principles of a living system," in Fullerton's words (p. 218)	Criteria for action (transparency, inclusion, equity) that make innovation "civilized and humane" (no. 164). The term "regenerative" does not appear	Level 5, "regenerative," of the SALTER maturity model	7, 9, 12, 15
9. Legacy and Example	"If the CEO personally feels socially responsible, each individual in the organization also becomes socially responsible" (p. 199); ethics training for leaders (p. 181)	"a culture of transparency, accountability and evaluation," applied first to the Church itself, in connection with synodality (no. 86); educating new generations to steer technology (no. 238)	E — Evasion → **Responsibility** (in its most demanding form)	4 (target 4.7)
10. Joy and Vitality	The "Triple Top Line" of joy, peace and contentment (p. 76)	The hope "that humanity will never lose its beauty" (no. 16); "truth, goodness and beauty" (no. 23). Weaker convergence: the text speaks more of hope than of joy	R — Rupture → **Resonance**	3 (target 3.4), 11 (target 11.7)

Reading. The convergence is clearest for questions 3, 4, 5, and 7: impact, listening to the voiceless, shared responsibility, and the sharing of power lie at the heart of all three texts. It is weaker for question 6, because neither Peopleism (which reads history as a progression through stages) nor

the encyclical (which reads it as an open path) shares the cyclical reading presented in chapter 3; and for question 10, which only Equiconscism makes into an evaluation criterion. Finally, recall that the SALTER scale runs in the opposite direction from the Ten-Question Scorecard (see chapter 8, section 8.11).

C.3 The Seven Principles and Positioning

Principle of Equiconscism	Peopleism (Ravi Chaudhry)	*Magnifica Humanitas*	Nature of the Link
1. Movement rather than state	The necessary balance between freedom and responsibility "has to be realized and nudged towards" (p. 58)	"[H]armonious growth" (no. 12); "initiating good processes and enabling them to mature" (no. 25)	Strong; Equiconscism supplies the method (the five-movement cycle)
2. Right measure rather than the maximum	The concept of "enough" (p. 110)	"even unchecked growth can give rise to impoverishment"; technical power that must not be "left unbalanced" (no. 113)	Very strong; no. 113 is the text closest to the image of the pendulum
3. Differentiated equity rather than uniformity	Finding the balance by aligning the aspirations of "the lower half of the population" with those at the top (p. 147)	"no single model of change or universal solution exists" (no. 153); dignity does not have to be earned (no. 53)	Very strong; equality of dignity remains absolute in both
4. Widening the gaze	"A 360-degree view excludes; a 720-degree view includes those who are excluded" (p. 123)	Impact assessments (no. 14); "a genuinely healthy attitude" requiring "rhythms that incorporate silence" (no. 146)	Very strong, including for the gesture of "knowing when to be silent"
5. Linking the levels	"The part is as much in the whole, as the whole is in the part" (p. 210)	Subsidiarity and solidarity (nos. 70 and 73)	Common foundation of the meso-micro / macro positioning
6. Regeneration rather than mere preservation	Fullerton and the regenerative economy (p. 218)	No "true progress" that degrades ecosystems (no. 84); justice with a "restorative dimension" (no. 79)	Partial; the vocabulary of regeneration belongs to Equiconscism and to Fullerton
7. Embraced responsibility	Responsible leadership (p. 35); the entrepreneur who feels "fully accountable" (p. 173)	"accountability" (no. 86); shared responsibility (no. 13)	Strong
What Equiconscism is not: neither a partisan ideology nor a utopia	"neither a leftist nor a rightist ideology" (p. 156); Ravi Chaudhry declines to use the term "utopia" (p. 8)	A "healthy realism that avoids both political idealism and cynicism" (no. 218)	Convergence; the SALTER guide speaks of a path of "neither fatalism nor naive idealism"
What Equiconscism is not: the balance of power	—	A warning that "the mentality of armed equilibrium and deterrence appears to be re-asserting itself" (no. 204)	The encyclical names precisely the kind of balance—an "armed equilibrium"—that Equiconscism rejects (chapter 6)

C.4 The Ten Commandments of Equiconscist AI and *Magnifica Humanitas*

The encyclical does not formulate "commandments"; those in chapter 13 are the sole responsibility of this book. The table indicates the paragraphs that set out a related criterion.

Commandment (Chapter 13)	*Magnifica Humanitas*
I. In the service of human dignity and the living world	That it always be "human intelligence, with its conscience and freedom, that guides technical innovations" (no. 97); "the human person is an end, not a means" (no. 152)
II. Decisions and responsibility in human hands	AI systems do not "have a moral conscience" (no. 99); the chain of responsibility and "accountability" (no. 105)
III. The truth about the machine	"When words are simulated, they do not build genuine relationships, but only their appearance" (no. 100); transparency and oversight (no. 164)
IV. Manipulating neither minds nor emotions	"a genuinely healthy attitude" toward information and attention (no. 146); business models that "thrive on human weakness" (no. 170)
V. Privacy and consent	"only an apparent consensus" (no. 56); data as a common good (no. 108)
VI. Fairness and the most vulnerable	"the inclusion of the most vulnerable" (no. 14)
VII. Measure and sufficiency	Energy and water footprint (no. 101); "Nothing in the world of AI is immaterial or magical" (no. 173)
VIII. Making human capacities grow	Educating people about the use of AI, by "teaching them to decide when and for what purpose it ought not to be used" (no. 140)
IX. Sharing power and value	A morality "determined by a few" (no. 107); "[d]isarming AI" (no. 110); patents, algorithms, and data as "new forms of property" (no. 67)
X. Keeping a hand on the off switch, serving peace	Slowing down when technology moves faster than awareness (no. 106); "No algorithm can make war morally acceptable" (no. 198)

C.5 The Seventeen SDGs Through the Lens of Equiconscism

The SDGs provide a common global language; Equiconscism offers questions for bringing them into everyday decisions (chapters 5 and 14). For each goal, the table indicates the dimension principally concerned and the key questions that shed the most direct light on it. It does not replace an organization's materiality analysis: it helps to prepare one.

SDG	Title	Main Dimension	Most Directly Relevant Key Questions
1	No Poverty	Measured and shared economy; inclusive society built on solidarity	2, 4
2	Zero Hunger	Respected and regenerated living world; inclusive society built on solidarity	3, 8
3	Good Health and Well-being	Inclusive society built on solidarity	2, 10
4	Quality Education	Inclusive society built on solidarity	9, 4

SDG	Title	Main Dimension	Most Directly Relevant Key Questions
5	Gender Equality	Inclusive society built on solidarity	4, 7
6	Clean Water and Sanitation	Respected and regenerated living world	3, 8
7	Affordable and Clean Energy	Respected and regenerated living world; measured and shared economy	3, 8
8	Decent Work and Economic Growth	Measured and shared economy	2, 5
9	Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure	Measured and shared economy	8, 6
10	Reduced Inequalities	Measured and shared economy; inclusive society built on solidarity	4, 7
11	Sustainable Cities and Communities	All three dimensions	4, 6, 10
12	Responsible Consumption and Production	Measured and shared economy; respected and regenerated living world	3, 5
13	Climate Action	Respected and regenerated living world	3, 6
14	Life Below Water	Respected and regenerated living world	3, 8
15	Life on Land	Respected and regenerated living world	3, 8
16	Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions	Inclusive society built on solidarity	5, 7
17	Partnerships for the Goals	All three dimensions (linking the levels)	5, 9

IN PRACTICE **Using These Tables Without Turning Them into a Label**

An organization that links its actions to the SDGs or to *Magnifica Humanitas* does not thereby become "Equiconscist." The correspondences serve to **translate**: to show a board of directors, a parish, or a municipality that the ten questions also speak their language. The proof remains in decisions, measured by the three-tier dashboard (chapter 14, section 14.5) and submitted to the scrutiny of stakeholders. The trap of "equi-washing" awaits those who display correspondences without changing their practices (section 14.6).

APPENDIX D

Glossary

This glossary brings together the terms specific to Equiconscism and the main concepts the book draws from the sciences, philosophy, economics, and the wisdom traditions. The definitions are deliberately brief; the reference in parentheses indicates the chapter or appendix where the concept is developed. Terms specific to Equiconscism are marked with an asterisk (*).

A

Absent, affected, involved* — The three circles of widening the gaze. **Those involved** are the actors in the decision (those who decide, carry it out, or finance it); **those affected** are the people who will bear its effects, directly or indirectly, here and elsewhere; **those absent** are the people who are not in the room but whom the decision touches—future generations, non-human beings, vulnerable or distant people. For each absent party, we ask who can speak for them. (chaps. 7, 8; appendix B)

Accountability — Giving an account, not merely being responsible: making visible what one has done, what worked and what failed, before those whom one's actions have touched. It underpins the fifth movement of the cycle and the seventh principle. (chaps. 7, 14)

Adaptive cycle — A model developed by C. S. Holling and Lance Gunderson: living and social systems pass through four phases—growth, conservation, release, reorganization—nested across several scales (*panarchy*). The reorganization phase remains open to our choices. (chaps. 3, 6, 8)

Adjust* — The fourth movement of the cycle of conscious balance: act with measure, correct the amplitude, decide by consent when the decision is collective. (chap. 7)

Allostasis — A concept proposed by Peter Sterling and Joseph Eyer (1988): the organism does not merely return to fixed values; it anticipates and adjusts its set points—"stability through change." When it is called upon without respite, it produces a wearing "allostatic load." (chap. 6)

Answer and Pass On* — The fifth movement of the cycle of conscious balance: give an account, measure, learn, and pass on; then the cycle begins again. (chap. 7)

Attention economy — The organization of a growing share of the digital economy around capturing attention, a scarce resource; as early as 1971, Herbert Simon noted that a wealth of information creates a poverty of attention. (chaps. 1, 10)

Autopoiesis — A concept developed by Humberto Maturana and Francisco Varela: a living being is a system that continuously produces the components that produce it; it remains itself by ceaselessly renewing itself. (chap. 6)

Awakeners of consciousness* — Ordinary people who, in their own milieu, help others see what is at play by asking the questions that habit had silenced. They are neither an elite nor initiates. (chap. 3)

B

Balance (in the Equiconscist sense)* — Neither stillness nor arithmetic equality, but the fruitful, regulated tension between complementary forces, maintained through movement. To be distinguished from thermodynamic equilibrium (the cessation of all flows), from the economists' general equilibrium (a point of rest), and from the balance of power (a power relationship frozen by deterrence). (chaps. 4, 6, 7)

BANI — An acronym proposed by Jamais Cascio in 2020 (*brittle*, *anxious*, *nonlinear*, *incomprehensible*) to describe a world that VUCA could no longer adequately name; it reintroduces emotion and vulnerability into the language of strategy. (chap. 2)

Biophilia — A term popularized by the biologist Edward O. Wilson (1984) to designate human beings' innate affinity with the living world; studies have associated contact with nature with health and recovery. (chap. 11)

C

Capabilities — A concept of the economist Amartya Sen: the real freedoms people have to lead the lives they have reason to value. The same resource does not give everyone the same possibilities; this is one of the foundations of differentiated equity. (chaps. 4, 5, 7)

Catalyst — In chemistry, a substance that speeds up a reaction by lowering its activation energy, without altering the final equilibrium and without being consumed. By analogy, an ordinary person who makes possible a change already carried by the situation, without forcing it or wearing themselves out. (chaps. 3, 14)

Chrematistics — In Aristotle (*Politics* I), the art of acquisition that aims at accumulating money for its own sake and knows no limit; it is opposed to *oikonomia*, household management, which is proportioned to the needs of life. (chap. 4)

Cofluencer®* — A stance developed by LP3 AG / SA: the ability to produce an effect together rather than to exert influence. (chap. 7)

Cognitive debt — An expression used by a team at the MIT Media Lab (Kosmyna et al., 2025) to describe the weakening of cognitive engagement and memory observed in people writing with a conversational assistant; a preliminary finding that needs replication. (chap. 13)

Common good — In Catholic social teaching, the sum of the conditions that allow people and groups to flourish; *Magnifica Humanitas* describes it as "the social expression of the dignity recognized in every person" (no. 59). Equiconscism makes it the horizon of the first key question. (chaps. 4, 7, 8, 12)

Commons — Resources (pastures, forests, water, knowledge) managed collectively by a community according to rules it sets for itself. Against Garrett Hardin's "tragedy of the commons," Elinor Ostrom showed that such communities can manage them sustainably without privatizing or nationalizing them. (chaps. 4, 10)

Conscious balance* — A dynamic regime, sustained by flows and feedbacks, that oscillates within the corridor of right measure and is regulated by a consciousness that sees, weighs, and answers. Motto: "Conscious balance: the art of thriving together, in motion and with measure." (chap. 7)

Conscious balance radar* — A spider-chart representation of the ten scores on the Ten-Question Scorecard, which makes strengths and gaps visible at a glance. (chap. 8)

Conscious damping* — A transposition from the physics of the pendulum: the regulation that reduces the amplitude of excesses without killing the movement. Too little damping lets the system run away; too much brings it to a standstill. (chaps. 6, 7)

Consciousness* — In Equiconscism, three interconnected senses, with no mystical connotation whatsoever: self-awareness (inner lucidity), awareness of others and of the world (attention, listening, understanding of interdependencies), and moral conscience (discernment of what is right, and responsibility). Consciousness is not a fourth dimension: it is the hand that holds the pendulum. (chap. 7)

Conscious Path (the)* — An inner journey in five stages—The Call, The Exploration, The Alignment, The Crossing, The Handing On—that accompanies personal transformation in the spirit of Equiconscism. (appendix A; chap. 14)

Consent (decision by) — A decision-making method derived from sociocracy (Kees Boeke, Gerard Endenburg): a decision is made when no reasoned and decisive objection remains with regard to the common aim. It does not require unanimity. (chaps. 7, 8)

Corridor of right measure* — For each dimension and at each level, the space between a floor (below which dignity, essential needs, or viability are not ensured) and a ceiling (beyond which excess exhausts people, tears the social fabric, or exceeds the limits of the living world). Conscious balance is the regulated oscillation within this corridor. The values of the floors and ceilings are not universal norms: they are set according to context, through deliberation and, where they exist, through scientific or legal benchmarks. (chap. 7)

Creative minorities — In Arnold Toynbee, groups that respond inventively to the challenges facing a civilization and that others freely imitate; a creative minority that seeks to dominate becomes a dominant minority, a sign of decline. (chap. 3)

Critical mass — The threshold beyond which a committed minority can tip a collective norm; in the experiment by Damon Centola and his colleagues (*Science*, 2018), it was around 25%, under laboratory conditions. (chap. 3)

Cycle of conscious balance* — The dynamic process of Equiconscism, in five movements applicable at every level: Perceive, Listen, Discern, Adjust, Answer and Pass On; then the cycle begins again. (chaps. 7, 14)

D

Differentiated equity* — Not everyone needs the same thing: conscious balance adjusts according to needs, capacities, contexts, cultures, and moments. Two safeguards: shared dignity is not differentiated, and neither dignity floors nor ecological ceilings are negotiable. (chap. 7)

Dimensions (the three)* — The three domains that Equiconscism seeks to make support one another, always in this order: a measured and shared economy; an inclusive society built on solidarity; a respected and regenerated living world. (chap. 7)

Discern* — The third movement of the cycle of conscious balance: weighing, on the scales, differentiated needs, floors and ceilings, and the short, medium, and long term, with the help of the ten key questions. (chaps. 7, 8)

Doughnut (Doughnut Economics) — The model of the economist Kate Raworth: a "safe and just space" for humanity, lying between a social foundation (twelve essential needs) and an ecological ceiling (the nine planetary boundaries). The corridor of right measure extends it by applying it to each dimension and at each level, and by adding dynamics and consciousness. (chaps. 5, 7)

E

Embeddedness — Karl Polanyi's thesis (*The Great Transformation*, 1944): for most of history, the economy was embedded in society; treating labor, land, and money as mere commodities threatens society itself. (chap. 4)

Equiconscism* — An economic and societal theory of conscious balance that conceives of balance not as a state to be reached but as a dynamic, continuous, and differentiated process (full definition in chapter 7). From the Latin *aequus* (equal, just), *conscientia* (knowing with), and the suffix *-ism*. Adjective: Equiconscist. French original: *Équiconscisme*. (chap. 7)

Equiconscism workshop* — A group process that puts the cycle of conscious balance into practice: preparation, individual reflection, sharing, listening to stakeholders, action plan, and follow-up. (chap. 14; appendix B)

Equi-washing* — Using the vocabulary of Equiconscism to burnish one's image without changing one's practices. Remedies: consistency between word and deed, and transparency about the gaps. (chap. 14)

F

Feedback — A central concept of cybernetics (Norbert Wiener, 1948): a system corrects its action according to the gap between its state and its goal. Negative feedback stabilizes; positive feedback amplifies. (chaps. 6, 7)

G

General equilibrium — A concept formalized by Léon Walras (1874): a state in which supply and demand are equalized simultaneously in all markets. A powerful analytical tool, but a static one. (chaps. 4, 6)

Golden ratio — The ratio $\varphi = (1 + \sqrt{5}) / 2 \approx 1.618$, defined by Euclid as the division of a line in "extreme and mean ratio." It is genuinely present in certain structures (the pentagon, phyllotaxis), but many of its alleged appearances (the Parthenon, the pyramids, the "ideal" face) belong to myth. (chap. 11)

Golden Rule — A principle found in similar forms in most religious and philosophical traditions: treat others as you would wish to be treated, or do not do to them what you would not wish to suffer. (chap. 12)

Goodhart's law — In the formulation of the anthropologist Marilyn Strathern (1997), which has become its common form: "When a measure becomes a target, it ceases to be a good measure." Charles Goodhart's original formulation (1975) concerned monetary policy. (chaps. 8, 14)

H

Homeostasis — A term coined by the physiologist Walter B. Cannon (1926) to designate the maintenance, through continuous regulation, of relatively constant internal conditions (temperature, blood sugar, pH); it extends Claude Bernard's *milieu intérieur* (internal environment). It is the biological model of the corridor: a floor, a ceiling, and regulation between the two. (chap. 6)

I

Inclusive society built on solidarity* — The second dimension: dignity, belonging, justice, participation, attention to differentiated needs, ties between generations. (chap. 7)

Input – Put-Put – Output* — The illustration of the hen: every activity transforms resources (*input*, the worm) through a living process (*put-put*, the hen's clucking, patient work) into a result (*output*, the egg), under the storm of the polycrisis and the eye of the fox. Lesson: conscious balance looks at the whole process, not only at the output. (chap. 7)

L

Linking the levels* — The fifth principle: explicitly linking the micro level (the person, the family), the meso level (organizations, municipalities, networks, sectors), and the macro level (states, international institutions, the global economy) through subsidiarity and solidarity. The French term, *reliance*, comes from sociology (Marcel Bolle de Bal) and from Edgar Morin, where it denotes the act of linking and binding together. (chaps. 6, 7, 9)

Listen* — The second movement of the cycle of conscious balance, and the fourth of the five gestures: open your arms and your heart, make room, fall silent, welcome every voice, including minority and absent ones. (chap. 7)

LP3®* — An approach to leadership developed by LP3 AG / SA (LP³: Leadership × Potential, Power, Performance): "the ability to create movement and to mobilize people toward a common goal and an attractive vision," grounded in legitimate rather than formal power. (chap. 7)

M

Measured and shared economy* — The first dimension: value creation in the service of life, which presupposes quality, durability, chosen sufficiency, fair sharing of value, and capital conceived as a means rather than an end. "Measured" does not mean "small." (chap. 7)

Mesotes — In Aristotle (*Nicomachean Ethics* II), right measure or "the mean": virtue lies between an excess and a deficiency, yet, in the order of excellence, it is a summit (*akrotes*) and not a lukewarm compromise. (chaps. 6, 7)

O

Octocracy®* — An approach to governance developed by LP3 AG / SA, which distributes decision rights and responsibility in organizations that want to operate neither purely hierarchically nor without structure. Its image is the octopus, whose arms act autonomously while remaining coordinated. (chap. 7)

Oikonomia — In Aristotle, the art of managing the household (*oikos*) with a view to the good life; it knows a limit, that of needs, unlike chrematistics. (chap. 4)

One Health — An integrated approach, adopted in 2021 by the FAO, WOAH, UNEP, and WHO, that aims to sustainably balance and optimize the health of people, animals, and ecosystems. (chap. 10)

P

Pendulum (emblem)* — A hand (consciousness) holds a string at the end of which a red sphere (our decisions) swings without reaching the extremes marked by dotted lines (the corridor), above a pair of scales (discernment), against the backdrop of an octopus (distributed intelligence), within a circle (the living world as a system). "A pendulum at rest no longer tells the time." (chap. 7)

Peopleism — In Ravi Chaudhry (*Capitalism to Peopleism*, 2024), "a system of governance that sensitively collates and meets the collective aspirations of all citizens, within sustainable resource parameters," in which people and nature take precedence over capital, which is conceived as a means. It operates mainly at the macro level. (chaps. 5, 7; appendix C)

Perceive* — The first movement of the cycle of conscious balance: open your eyes; see the situation, the forces at play, the parties involved and affected, the weak signals. (chap. 7)

Planetary boundaries — A scientific framework proposed in 2009 by Johan Rockström and his colleagues: nine Earth-system processes whose transgression threatens the stability of that system. According to the 2025 *Planetary Health Check*, seven of the nine boundaries have been transgressed. (chaps. 1, 7)

Polycrisis — A term used as early as 1993 by Edgar Morin and Anne Brigitte Kern (*Terre-Patrie*—published in English as *Homeland Earth*) and popularized in 2022 by Adam Tooze: disparate crises that interact, so that the whole is more overwhelming than the sum of its parts. In 2024, researchers proposed a rigorous definition based on the causal entanglement of crises. (chap. 1)

R

Regeneration* — The sixth principle: leave people, relationships, and the living world in better shape than one found them, instead of merely reducing the damage. (chaps. 7, 8)

Regenerative economy — A current formalized notably by John Fullerton (*Regenerative Capitalism*, 2015), which proposes aligning the economy with the principles of living systems, including the pursuit of balance. (chaps. 5, 8)

Requisite variety (law of) — A law formulated by W. Ross Ashby (1956): "only variety can destroy variety"—that is, absorb it. A regulator must have as many responses available as the situation presents disturbances; this is the cybernetic justification for differentiated equity and subsidiarity. (chaps. 6, 7)

Resilience — For the ecologist C. S. Holling (1973), the capacity of a system to absorb changes while persisting, to be distinguished from stability (the return to a state of equilibrium); for Boris Cyrulnik, the capacity to resume development after a trauma, thanks to relationships. (chaps. 1, 6)

Resonance — For Hartmut Rosa, a living relationship to the world in which we are touched and respond, without being able to command it; its opposite is alienation. It is also the lever for SALTER's sixth fracture, rupture. (chaps. 1, 2, 6)

Respected and regenerated living world* — The third dimension, that of regenerative ecology: respecting planetary boundaries, ecosystems, animals, and common resources (water, air, soil, land), and aiming for regeneration rather than mere damage reduction. (chaps. 7, 10)

Restorative justice — An approach concerned with the harm caused, the needs of those affected, and the responsibility of the offender, inviting victim, offender, and community—on a voluntary basis and with a trained third party—to seek what can be repaired. It complements criminal justice without replacing it. (chap. 10)

S

SALTER®* — A diagnostic instrument published by David Fiorucci (guide, 2026): six fractures of our time, each paired with a lever—Saturation → Clarity; Artificiality → Embodied Presence; Lability → Inner Anchoring; Tribalism → Co-creation; Evasion → Responsibility; Rupture → Resonance. SALTER answers the question "Where are we?"; Equiconscism provides its framework of meaning and action. Its scale runs from 1 (zone of lucidity) to 5 (silent crisis). (chaps. 2, 8)

Seven principles* — Movement rather than state; right measure rather than the maximum; differentiated equity rather than uniformity; widening the gaze; linking the levels; regeneration rather than mere preservation; embraced responsibility. (chap. 7)

Social acceleration — The diagnosis of the sociologist Hartmut Rosa: technological acceleration, the acceleration of social change, and the acceleration of the pace of life reinforce one another, to the point that technologies meant to save time are accompanied by a growing sense of not having enough of it. (chaps. 1, 6)

Solidarity — The principle that no one should be left outside the corridor of right measure. It is inseparable from subsidiarity: without solidarity, subsidiarity becomes the defense of particular interests; without subsidiarity, solidarity degenerates into a form of welfare that does not foster responsibility (*Magnifica Humanitas*, no. 73). (chaps. 7, 9)

Stakeholder Scorecard* — A tool that gathers the perceptions of those who experience an initiative (employees, beneficiaries, partners, residents) and complements self-assessment with the view of others. (chap. 14; appendix B)

Subsidiarity — The principle that entrusts decisions to the level closest to the people concerned, because that is where needs are best known; the higher level intervenes only for what the lower level cannot handle. Formulated in Catholic social teaching (*Quadragesimo anno*, 1931), it is enshrined in Article 5a of the Swiss Federal Constitution. (chaps. 4, 7, 9)

T

Ten Commandments of Equiconscist AI* — Ten brief rules proposed by this book to the designers, leaders, and users of artificial intelligence, from the primacy of human dignity and the living world (I) to the ability to stop systems and the service of peace (X). They are not drawn from any religious or official text. (chap. 13)

Ten key questions* — The ten questions that guide discernment at every level: Meaning and Purpose; Inner / Outer Balance; Overall Impact; Inclusion and Listening; Shared Responsibility; Timing and Cycles; Power and Consent; Regenerative Innovation; Legacy and Example; Joy and Vitality. (chap. 8)

Ten-Question Scorecard* — A self-assessment tool that scores each key question from 1 (needs strengthening / absent) to 5 (fully integrated); the average is read in four zones: alert, transition, emergence, balance. The SALTER scale runs in the opposite direction. (chap. 8; appendix B)

Threefold connection* — Connection to oneself, to others, and to nature, corresponding to the three dimensions: the measured economy begins with a right relationship to one's own needs, the inclusive society with a right relationship to others, and the regenerated living world with a right relationship to nature. (chaps. 6, 7)

Three-tier dashboard* — A measurement system that combines the view of self (the Ten-Question Scorecard), the view of others (the Stakeholder Scorecard), and the view of facts (about ten result indicators chosen per dimension). (chap. 14)

Triple Bottom Line — A concept of John Elkington (1994): measuring a company's performance on three bottom lines—economic, social, and environmental; in 2018 its author himself called for rethinking it, since it had failed to transform practices. (chap. 5)

V

VUCA — An acronym (*volatility*, *uncertainty*, *complexity*, *ambiguity*) introduced at the U.S. Army War College in the late 1980s to describe a world that had become harder to read, then widely adopted in the management literature. (chap. 2)

W

Widening the gaze* — "To look beyond one's own navel": before deciding, identify those involved, those affected, and those absent, human and non-human, present and yet to come. It is practiced through five gestures: opening one's eyes, opening one's arms, opening one's heart, listening, and knowing when to be silent. (chap. 7; appendix B)

Wisdom economy — For Ravi Chaudhry, the economy that succeeds the knowledge economy: whereas the latter always wants more, the former understands the concept of "enough." (chaps. 5, 7)

APPENDIX E

General Bibliography

This bibliography brings together the books, articles, reports, and official texts cited in the notes to chapters 1 through 15 and appendices A and B, with duplicates removed and entries grouped by subject. Each reference appears only once, under the heading that suits it best; precise pages, paragraphs, and web addresses are given in the chapter notes. The web pages of companies, associations, and projects cited as examples (chapters 9 and 10), press releases, and press reviews are not repeated here, except where they are the very source of a quotation. No online encyclopedia and no quotation website appears among the sources.

For ancient and sacred texts, the reference edition or translation is indicated; for translated authors, the original edition is followed, where it was used, by the French translation.

E.1 Writings by the Author

Publications

- Fiorucci, David, SALTER® — *La boussole consciente pour un monde en mutation*, Biel/Bienne: LP3 AG / SA, 2026, ISBN 978-3-9526687-1-9 (free publication, www.salter.ch).
- Fiorucci, David, "SALTER — Au-delà de VUCA et BANI: une lecture consciente du monde en mutation," LP3 column no. 57, Biel/Bienne: LP3 AG / SA, November 25, 2025.
- Fiorucci, David, "IA et leadership: pourquoi la vraie mise à niveau est humaine, pas technologique" (interview conducted by Dave Drodge), Biel/Bienne: LP3 AG / SA, March 28, 2026.
- Fiorucci, David, *La Voie Consciente — Un parcours en 5 étapes pour incarner sa transformation et œuvrer avec justesse*, booklet, Biel/Bienne: LP3 AG / SA, 2025.
- Fiorucci, David, and Nast, Thomas, *Leader pour une économie durable*, Bern: Stämpfli, 2017, ISBN 978-3-7272-6006-3 (German orig. 2016).
- Fiorucci, David, and Nast, Thomas, *Octocratie — Redonnons du sens aux organisations*, Bern: jahr+tag, 2024, ISBN 978-3-9526038-1-9.

Unpublished Working Documents

- Fiorucci, David, "Equilonomy" working notes, February 14, 2025.
- Fiorucci, David, *Équiconscisme*, manuscript and working documents, 2025.
- Fiorucci, David, "L'Équilibre conscient" working notes, 2025.
- Fiorucci, David, "L'impact conscient: le point de rencontre entre santé mentale et leadership LP3," working paper, Biel/Bienne: LP3 AG / SA, October 2025.

E.2 Companion Texts

Ravi Chaudhry and Peopleism

- Chaudhry, Ravi, *Capitalism to Peopleism: Inspiring a Leadership Transformation*, New Delhi: Simon & Schuster India, 2024, ISBN 978-81-972789-4-5 (FICCI Publishing Awards 2025, "Business Book of the Year – Business Management").
- Chaudhry, Ravi, "Our economy has been living in an Adam Smith world since 1776. Something different is coming," *Fortune*, March 22, 2026.
- Chaudhry, Ravi, *Quest for Exceptional Leadership: Mirage to Reality*, New Delhi: Sage, 2011; 2nd ed., 2016.

Magnifica Humanitas

- Leo XIV, *Encyclical Letter Magnifica Humanitas on Safeguarding the Human Person in the Time of Artificial Intelligence*, Vatican City, May 15, 2026, accessed October 16, 2026, https://www.vatican.va/content/leo-xiv/en/encyclicals/documents/20260515-magnifica-humanitas.html.

E.3 Philosophy

Antiquity

- Aristotle, *Éthique à Nicomaque*, trans. Jules Tricot, Paris: Vrin, 1959.
- Aristotle, *Les Politiques*, trans. Pierre Pellegrin, Paris: GF-Flammarion, 1990.
- Diels, Hermann, and Kranz, Walther, *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*, 6th ed., Berlin: Weidmann, 1951–1952.
- Conche, Marcel, *Héraclite. Fragments*, Paris: PUF, 1986.
- Pradeau, Jean-François, *Héraclite. Fragments*, Paris: GF-Flammarion, 2002.
- Epictetus, *Enchiridion* (*Handbook*).
- Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations*.
- Plato, *Apologie de Socrate. Criton*, trans. Luc Brisson, Paris: GF-Flammarion, 1997.
- Plato, *Philèbe*, trans. Auguste Diès, Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1941.
- Plato, *Protagoras*; *Charmides*; *Theaetetus*; *Cratylus*; *Laws*.
- Plotinus, *Enneads*.
- Stobaeus, *Anthology* (fragments of Hierocles).

Middle Ages and Modern Period

- Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, IIa-IIae.
- Montaigne, Michel de, *Les Essais*, ed. Pierre Villey and Verdun-Louis Saulnier, Paris: PUF, 1965.
- Pascal, Blaise, *Pensées*.
- Spinoza, Baruch, *Éthique*, trans. Charles Appuhn, Paris: Garnier, 1913 (repr. GF-Flammarion).
- Leibniz, Gottfried Wilhelm, *Discours de métaphysique* (1686); *Monadologie* (1714), ed. Michel Fichant, Paris: Gallimard, "Folio essais," 2004.

- Leibniz, Gottfried Wilhelm, *Codex juris gentium diplomaticus*, Hanover, 1693 (preface).
- Leibniz, Gottfried Wilhelm, *Essais de Théodicée sur la bonté de Dieu, la liberté de l'homme et l'origine du mal*, Amsterdam: Troyel, 1710; ed. Jacques Brunschwig, Paris: GF-Flammarion, 1969.
- Gerhardt, Carl Immanuel (ed.), *Die philosophischen Schriften von G. W. Leibniz*, 7 vols., Berlin: Weidmann, 1875–1890.
- Riley, Patrick (ed.), *Leibniz: Political Writings*, 2nd ed., Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988.
- Leinkauf, Thomas, "Diversitas identitate compensata. Ein Grundtheorem in Leibniz' Denken," Münster: University of Münster (online text).
- Montesquieu, *De l'esprit des lois*, Geneva: Barrillot et fils, 1748.
- Kant, Immanuel, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* (1785).
- Kant, Immanuel, *Critique de la faculté de juger* (1790), trans. Alain Renaut, Paris: Aubier, 1995.

Nineteenth to Twenty-First Centuries

- Arendt, Hannah, *The Human Condition*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958; French trans. Georges Fradier, *Condition de l'homme moderne*, Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 1961.
- Arendt, Hannah, *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, New York: Viking, 1963; French trans. *Eichmann à Jérusalem*, Paris: Gallimard, 1966.
- Arendt, Hannah, *The Life of the Mind*, New York: Harcourt, 1978; French trans. *La Vie de l'esprit*, Paris: PUF, 1981.
- Arendt, Hannah, *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982; French trans. *Juger*, Paris: Seuil, 1991.
- Bergson, Henri, *Essai sur les données immédiates de la conscience*, Paris: Alcan, 1889.
- Bergson, Henri, *L'Évolution créatrice*, Paris: Alcan, 1907.
- Bolle de Bal, Marcel, "Reliance, déliance, liance: émergence de trois notions sociologiques," *Sociétés*, no. 80, 2003/2, p. 99 ff., DOI: 10.3917/soc.080.0099.
- Buber, Martin, *Ich und Du*, Leipzig: Insel, 1923; French trans. *Je et Tu*, Paris: Aubier, 1938.
- Comte-Sponville, André, *L'Esprit de l'athéisme. Introduction à une spiritualité sans Dieu*, Paris: Albin Michel, 2006.
- Gramsci, Antonio, *Quaderni del carcere*, critical ed. Valentino Gerratana, Turin: Einaudi, 1975; French trans. *Cahiers de prison*, ed. Robert Paris, Paris: Gallimard.
- Habermas, Jürgen, *Écrits politiques*, trans. Christian Bouchindhomme and Rainer Rochlitz, Paris: Cerf, 1990.
- Honneth, Axel, *La Lutte pour la reconnaissance*, Paris: Cerf, 2000 (orig. 1992).
- Husserl, Edmund, *Méditations cartésiennes*, trans. Gabrielle Peiffer and Emmanuel Levinas, Paris: Armand Colin, 1931; repr. Paris: Vrin, 1947.
- Jonas, Hans, *Le Principe responsabilité. Une éthique pour la civilisation technologique*, trans. Jean Greisch, Paris: Cerf, "Passages" series, 1990 (orig. 1979); repr. Paris: Flammarion, "Champs" series, no. 402, 1998.
- Kuhn, Thomas S., *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962; French trans. *La Structure des révolutions scientifiques*, Paris: Flammarion, 1972.
- Levinas, Emmanuel, *Totalité et infini. Essai sur l'extériorité*, The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1961.

- Morin, Edgar, *La Méthode*, 6 vols., Paris: Seuil, 1977–2004.
- Morin, Edgar, and Kern, Anne Brigitte, *Terre-Patrie*, Paris: Seuil, 1993.
- Popper, Karl R., *The Poverty of Historicism*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1957; French trans. Hervé Rousseau, *Misère de l'historicisme*, Paris: Plon, 1956.
- Ricœur, Paul, *Soi-même comme un autre*, Paris: Seuil, 1990.
- Weil, Simone, *Attente de Dieu*, Paris: La Colombe, 1950.
- Weil, Simone, *La Pesanteur et la Grâce*, Paris: Plon, 1947.
- Weil, Simone, and Bousquet, Joë, *Correspondance*, Lausanne: L'Âge d'Homme, "Le Bruit du temps" series, 1982.
- Whitehead, Alfred North, *Process and Reality*, New York: Macmillan, 1929; French trans. *Procès et réalité*, Paris: Gallimard, 1995.
- Young, Iris Marion, *Responsibility for Justice*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011.

E.4 Economics and Society

History of Economic Thought

- Arrow, Kenneth J., and Debreu, Gérard, "Existence of an Equilibrium for a Competitive Economy," *Econometrica*, vol. 22, no. 3, 1954, pp. 265–290.
- Daly, Herman E., *Steady-State Economics*, San Francisco: W. H. Freeman, 1977.
- Epstein, Gerald A. (ed.), *Financialization and the World Economy*, Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, 2005.
- Erhard, Ludwig, *Wohlstand für Alle*, Düsseldorf: Econ, 1957.
- Eucken, Walter, *Grundsätze der Wirtschaftspolitik*, Bern and Tübingen: Francke and Mohr, 1952.
- Fourastié, Jean, *Les Trente Glorieuses ou la révolution invisible de 1946 à 1975*, Paris: Fayard, 1979.
- Friedman, Milton, *Capitalism and Freedom*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962.
- Friedman, Milton, "The Social Responsibility of Business Is to Increase Its Profits," *The New York Times Magazine*, September 13, 1970.
- Georgescu-Roegen, Nicholas, *The Entropy Law and the Economic Process*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1971.
- Hardin, Garrett, "The Tragedy of the Commons," *Science*, vol. 162, no. 3859, 1968, pp. 1243–1248.
- Hayek, Friedrich A., *The Road to Serfdom*, London: Routledge, 1944.
- Hayek, Friedrich A., "The Use of Knowledge in Society," *American Economic Review*, vol. 35, no. 4, 1945, pp. 519–530.
- Hickel, Jason, *Less Is More*, London: William Heinemann, 2020.
- Jensen, Michael C., and Meckling, William H., "Theory of the Firm: Managerial Behavior, Agency Costs and Ownership Structure," *Journal of Financial Economics*, vol. 3, no. 4, 1976, pp. 305–360.
- Jevons, William Stanley, *The Coal Question*, London: Macmillan, 1865.
- Jevons, William Stanley, *The Theory of Political Economy*, London: Macmillan, 1871.

- Kahneman, Daniel, and Tversky, Amos, "Prospect Theory: An Analysis of Decision under Risk," *Econometrica*, vol. 47, no. 2, 1979, pp. 263–291.
- Kallis, Giorgos, *Degrowth*, Newcastle: Agenda Publishing, 2018.
- Keynes, John Maynard, *A Tract on Monetary Reform*, London: Macmillan, 1923.
- Keynes, John Maynard, *Essays in Persuasion*, London: Macmillan, 1931 (including "Economic Possibilities for our Grandchildren," 1930).
- Keynes, John Maynard, *The General Theory of Employment, Interest and Money*, London: Macmillan, 1936.
- Kornai, János, *Economics of Shortage*, Amsterdam: North-Holland, 1980.
- Latouche, Serge, *Le Pari de la décroissance*, Paris: Fayard, 2006.
- Malthus, Thomas Robert, *An Essay on the Principle of Population*, London: J. Johnson, 1798.
- Marx, Karl, *Das Kapital*, vol. I, Hamburg: Otto Meissner, 1867.
- Marx, Karl, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844* (published in 1932).
- Meadows, Donella H., Meadows, Dennis L., Randers, Jørgen, and Behrens III, William W., *The Limits to Growth*, New York: Universe Books, 1972.
- Menger, Carl, *Grundsätze der Volkswirtschaftslehre*, Vienna: Braumüller, 1871.
- Mill, John Stuart, *Principles of Political Economy* (1848), ed. W. J. Ashley, London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1909.
- Müller-Armack, Alfred, *Wirtschaftslenkung und Marktwirtschaft*, Hamburg: Verlag für Wirtschaft und Sozialpolitik, 1947.
- Mun, Thomas, *England's Treasure by Forraign Trade*, London: Thomas Clark, 1664.
- Nash, John F., "Equilibrium Points in n-Person Games," *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, vol. 36, no. 1, 1950, pp. 48–49.
- Netting, Robert McC., *Balancing on an Alp. Ecological Change and Continuity in a Swiss Mountain Community*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981.
- Ostrom, Elinor, *Governing the Commons: The Evolution of Institutions for Collective Action*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990; French trans. *La Gouvernance des biens communs*, Brussels: De Boeck, 2010.
- Pareto, Vilfredo, *Manuel d'économie politique*, Paris: Giard et Brière, 1909.
- Pigou, Arthur Cecil, *The Economics of Welfare*, London: Macmillan, 1920.
- Polanyi, Karl, *The Great Transformation*, New York: Farrar & Rinehart, 1944; French trans. *La Grande Transformation*, Paris: Gallimard, 1983.
- Quesnay, François, *Œuvres économiques complètes et autres textes*, ed. Christine Théré, Loïc Charles, and Jean-Claude Perrot, Paris: INED, 2005 (including the *Tableau économique*, 1758).
- Ricardo, David, *On the Principles of Political Economy and Taxation*, London: John Murray, 1817.
- Röpke, Wilhelm, *Jenseits von Angebot und Nachfrage*, Erlenbach-Zurich: Rentsch, 1958.
- Schumacher, E. F., *Small Is Beautiful: A Study of Economics as if People Mattered*, London: Blond & Briggs, 1973.
- Schumpeter, Joseph A., *Business Cycles*, New York: McGraw-Hill, 1939.
- Sen, Amartya, *Commodities and Capabilities*, Amsterdam: North-Holland, 1985.

- Sen, Amartya, *Development as Freedom*, New York: Knopf, 1999; French trans. *Un nouveau modèle économique*, Paris: Odile Jacob, 2000.
- Smith, Adam, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759), ed. D. D. Raphael and A. L. Macfie, Oxford: Clarendon Press (Glasgow Edition), 1976.
- Smith, Adam, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, London: W. Strahan and T. Cadell, 1776; ed. R. H. Campbell, A. S. Skinner, and W. B. Todd, Oxford: Clarendon Press (Glasgow Edition), 1976.
- Smith, Adam, *Essays on Philosophical Subjects*, London: Cadell & Davies, 1795; ed. W. P. D. Wightman and J. C. Bryce, Oxford: Clarendon Press (Glasgow Edition), 1980.
- Thaler, Richard H., and Sunstein, Cass R., *Nudge*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008.
- Turgot, Anne-Robert-Jacques, *Éloge de Vincent de Gournay* (1759).
- Walras, Léon, *Éléments d'économie politique pure*, Lausanne: Corbaz, 1874–1877.
- Walras, Léon, *Études d'économie sociale*, Lausanne: Rouge, 1896.
- Williamson, John, "What Washington Means by Policy Reform," in J. Williamson (ed.), *Latin American Adjustment: How Much Has Happened?*, Washington: Institute for International Economics, 1990.

Business, Responsibility, and New Economies

- Bebchuk, Lucian A., and Tallarita, Roberto, "The Illusory Promise of Stakeholder Governance," *Cornell Law Review*, vol. 106, 2020, pp. 91–178.
- Bowen, Howard R., *Social Responsibilities of the Businessman*, New York: Harper & Brothers, 1953; repr. Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2013.
- Brunnermeier, Markus K., *The Resilient Society*, Colorado Springs: Endeavor Literary Press, 2021.
- Business Roundtable, *Statement on the Purpose of a Corporation*, Washington, August 19, 2019.
- Carroll, Archie B., "The Pyramid of Corporate Social Responsibility: Toward the Moral Management of Organizational Stakeholders," *Business Horizons*, vol. 34, no. 4, 1991, pp. 39–48.
- Carroll, Archie B., "Corporate Social Responsibility: Evolution of a Definitional Construct," *Business & Society*, vol. 38, no. 3, 1999, pp. 268–295.
- Crane, Andrew, Palazzo, Guido, Spence, Laura J., and Matten, Dirk, "Contesting the Value of 'Creating Shared Value,'" *California Management Review*, vol. 56, no. 2, 2014, pp. 130–153.
- Delannoy, Isabelle, *L'Économie symbiotique. Régénérer la planète, l'économie et la société*, Arles: Actes Sud, "Domaine du possible," 2017.
- Elkington, John, "Towards the Sustainable Corporation: Win-Win-Win Business Strategies for Sustainable Development," *California Management Review*, vol. 36, no. 2, 1994, pp. 90–100.
- Elkington, John, *Cannibals with Forks: The Triple Bottom Line of 21st Century Business*, Oxford: Capstone, 1997.
- Elkington, John, "25 Years Ago I Coined the Phrase 'Triple Bottom Line.' Here's Why It's Time to Rethink It," *Harvard Business Review*, June 25, 2018.
- Felber, Christian, *Die Gemeinwohl-Ökonomie*, Vienna: Deuticke, 2010.
- Freeman, R. Edward, *Strategic Management: A Stakeholder Approach*, Boston: Pitman, 1984.

- Fullerton, John, *Regenerative Capitalism: How Universal Principles and Patterns Will Shape Our New Economy*, Greenwich, CT: Capital Institute, April 2015.
- Henderson, Hazel, *The Politics of the Solar Age: Alternatives to Economics*, New York: Anchor Press/Doubleday, 1981.
- Henderson, Hazel, *Building a Win-Win World: Life Beyond Global Economic Warfare*, San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler, 1996.
- Henderson, Hazel, Lickerman, Jon, and Flynn, Patrice (eds.), *Calvert-Henderson Quality of Life Indicators: A New Tool for Assessing National Trends*, Bethesda, MD: Calvert Group, 2000.
- Kubiszewski, Ida, et al., "Beyond GDP: Measuring and Achieving Global Genuine Progress," *Ecological Economics*, vol. 93, 2013, pp. 57–68.
- Mackey, John, and Sisodia, Raj, *Conscious Capitalism: Liberating the Heroic Spirit of Business*, Boston: Harvard Business Review Press, 2013.
- Porter, Michael E., and Kramer, Mark R., "Creating Shared Value," *Harvard Business Review*, vol. 89, nos. 1–2, 2011, pp. 62–77.
- Raworth, Kate, *A Safe and Just Space for Humanity*, Oxfam Discussion Paper, Oxford: Oxfam, 2012.
- Raworth, Kate, *Doughnut Economics: Seven Ways to Think Like a 21st-Century Economist*, London: Random House Business, 2017; French trans. *La Théorie du donut*, Paris: Plon, 2018.
- Schwab, Klaus, "Davos Manifesto 2020: The Universal Purpose of a Company in the Fourth Industrial Revolution," Geneva: World Economic Forum, December 2, 2019.
- Sennett, Richard, *The Craftsman*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008; French trans. Pierre-Emmanuel Dauzat, *Ce que sait la main. La culture de l'artisanat*, Paris: Albin Michel, 2009.
- Sprecher, Thomas, Egger, Philipp, and von Schnurbein, Georg, *Swiss Foundation Code 2021*, Bern: Stämpfli, 2021 (published for SwissFoundations).
- Stodder, James, "Complementary Credit Networks and Macroeconomic Stability: Switzerland's Wirtschaftsring," *Journal of Economic Behavior & Organization*, vol. 72, no. 1, 2009, pp. 79–95.

Politics, Democracy, and the Present Day

- Bennett, Nathan, and Lemoine, G. James, "What VUCA Really Means for You," *Harvard Business Review*, vol. 92, nos. 1–2, 2014, p. 27.
- Bennis, Warren, and Nanus, Burt, *Leaders: The Strategies for Taking Charge*, New York: Harper & Row, 1985.
- Cascio, Jamais, "Facing the Age of Chaos," *Medium*, April 29, 2020.
- Chenoweth, Erica, and Stephan, Maria J., *Why Civil Resistance Works*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2011.
- Chenoweth, Erica, "Questions, Answers, and Some Cautionary Updates Regarding the 3.5% Rule," *Carr Center Discussion Paper*, Harvard Kennedy School, April 2020.
- Chenoweth, Erica, "The Future of Nonviolent Resistance," *Journal of Democracy*, vol. 31, no. 3, 2020, pp. 69–84.
- da Empoli, Giuliano, *Les Ingénieurs du chaos*, Paris: JC Lattès, 2019.
- da Empoli, Giuliano, *Le Mage du Kremlin*, Paris: Gallimard, 2022.

- da Empoli, Giuliano, *L'heure des prédateurs*, Paris: Gallimard, 2025.
- Kennedy, Robert F., "Remarks at the University of Kansas," Lawrence, Kansas, March 18, 1968 (John F. Kennedy Presidential Library).
- Lincoln, Abraham, Gettysburg Address, November 19, 1863 (the so-called "Bliss" copy).
- Maalouf, Amin, *Les Identités meurtrières*, Paris: Grasset, 1998.
- Melgar, Teresa R., "A Time of Closure? Participatory Budgeting in Porto Alegre, Brazil, after the Workers' Party Era," *Journal of Latin American Studies*, vol. 46, no. 1, 2014, pp. 121–149.
- Orwell, George, "Notes on Nationalism," *Polemic*, no. 1, London, October 1945.
- Stiehm, Judith Hicks, and Townsend, J., *The U.S. Army War College: Military Education in a Democracy*, Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2002.
- Tooze, Adam, "Welcome to the world of the polycrisis," *Financial Times*, October 28, 2022.

Sociology and Psychology

- Antonovsky, Aaron, *Unraveling the Mystery of Health: How People Manage Stress and Stay Well*, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1987.
- Argyris, Chris, and Schön, Donald A., *Organizational Learning: A Theory of Action Perspective*, Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1978.
- Arnstein, Sherry R., "A Ladder of Citizen Participation," *Journal of the American Institute of Planners*, vol. 35, no. 4, 1969, pp. 216–224.
- Axelrod, Robert, *The Evolution of Cooperation*, New York: Basic Books, 1984.
- Bandura, Albert, *Social Learning Theory*, Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1977.
- Baumeister, Roy F., and Leary, Mark R., "The Need to Belong: Desire for Interpersonal Attachments as a Fundamental Human Motivation," *Psychological Bulletin*, vol. 117, no. 3, 1995, pp. 497–529.
- Boszormenyi-Nagy, Ivan, and Spark, Geraldine M., *Invisible Loyalties: Reciprocity in Intergenerational Family Therapy*, New York: Harper & Row, 1973.
- Bridges, William, *Transitions: Making Sense of Life's Changes*, Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1980.
- Campbell, Donald T., "Assessing the Impact of Planned Social Change," *Evaluation and Program Planning*, vol. 2, no. 1, 1979, pp. 67–90.
- Campbell, Joseph, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, New York: Pantheon Books, 1949; French trans. *Le Héros aux mille et un visages*.
- Cameron, William Bruce, *Informal Sociology: A Casual Introduction to Sociological Thinking*, New York: Random House, 1963.
- Cyrulnik, Boris, *Un merveilleux malheur*, Paris: Odile Jacob, 1999.
- Cyrulnik, Boris, *Le Laboureur et les mangeurs de vent. Liberté intérieure et confortable servitude*, Paris: Odile Jacob, 2022.
- Darley, John M., and Latané, Bibb, "Bystander Intervention in Emergencies: Diffusion of Responsibility," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, vol. 8, no. 4, 1968, pp. 377–383.
- Deci, Edward L., and Ryan, Richard M., "The 'What' and 'Why' of Goal Pursuits: Human Needs and the Self-Determination of Behavior," *Psychological Inquiry*, vol. 11, no. 4, 2000, pp. 227–268.
- Deming, W. Edwards, *Out of the Crisis*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1986.

- Durkheim, Émile, *De la division du travail social*, Paris: Alcan, 1893.
- Durkheim, Émile, *Le Suicide. Étude de sociologie*, Paris: Alcan, 1897.
- Edmondson, Amy, "Psychological Safety and Learning Behavior in Work Teams," *Administrative Science Quarterly*, vol. 44, no. 2, 1999, pp. 350–383.
- Elias, Norbert, *Über den Prozess der Zivilisation*, Basel: Haus zum Falken, 1939; French trans. *La Civilisation des mœurs* (1973) and *La Dynamique de l'Occident* (1975), Paris: Calmann-Lévy.
- Endenburg, Gerard, *Sociocracy: The Organization of Decision-Making. "No Objection" as the Principle of Sociocracy*, Delft: Eburon, 1998 (translated from the Dutch edition).
- Erikson, Erik H., *Childhood and Society*, New York: W. W. Norton, 1950; French trans. *Enfance et société*, Neuchâtel: Delachaux et Niestlé.
- Frankl, Viktor E., *Ein Psycholog erlebt das Konzentrationslager*, Vienna: Verlag für Jugend und Volk, 1946; English ed. *Man's Search for Meaning*, Boston: Beacon Press, 2006; French trans. *Découvrir un sens à sa vie*, Montreal: Éditions de l'Homme, 1988.
- Fredrickson, Barbara L., "The Role of Positive Emotions in Positive Psychology: The Broaden-and-Build Theory of Positive Emotions," *American Psychologist*, vol. 56, no. 3, 2001, pp. 218–226.
- Gollwitzer, Peter M., "Implementation Intentions: Strong Effects of Simple Plans," *American Psychologist*, vol. 54, no. 7, 1999, pp. 493–503.
- Haicault, Monique, "La gestion ordinaire de la vie en deux," *Sociologie du travail*, vol. 26, no. 3, 1984, pp. 268–277.
- Holt-Lunstad, Julianne, Smith, Timothy B., and Layton, J. Bradley, "Social Relationships and Mortality Risk: A Meta-analytic Review," *PLoS Medicine*, vol. 7, no. 7, 2010, e1000316.
- Klein, Gary, "Performing a Project Premortem," *Harvard Business Review*, vol. 85, no. 9, 2007, pp. 18–19.
- Lally, Phillippa, van Jaarsveld, Cornelia H. M., Potts, Henry W. W., and Wardle, Jane, "How are habits formed: Modelling habit formation in the real world," *European Journal of Social Psychology*, vol. 40, no. 6, 2010, pp. 998–1009.
- Lave, Jean, and Wenger, Étienne, *Situated Learning: Legitimate Peripheral Participation*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991.
- Maslow, Abraham H., "A Theory of Human Motivation," *Psychological Review*, vol. 50, no. 4, 1943, pp. 370–396.
- Mauss, Marcel, "Essai sur le don. Forme et raison de l'échange dans les sociétés archaïques," *L'Année sociologique*, new series, vol. 1, 1923–1924 (published 1925).
- Pennebaker, James W., and Beall, Sandra K., "Confronting a Traumatic Event: Toward an Understanding of Inhibition and Disease," *Journal of Abnormal Psychology*, vol. 95, no. 3, 1986, pp. 274–281.
- Pettigrew, Thomas F., and Tropp, Linda R., "A Meta-Analytic Test of Intergroup Contact Theory," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, vol. 90, no. 5, 2006, pp. 751–783.
- Prochaska, James O., and DiClemente, Carlo C., "Stages and Processes of Self-Change of Smoking: Toward an Integrative Model of Change," *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, vol. 51, no. 3, 1983, pp. 390–395.
- Rogers, Carl R., *On Becoming a Person*, Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1961; French trans. *Le Développement de la personne*.

- Rosa, Hartmut, *Beschleunigung*, Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 2005; French trans. Didier Renault, *Accélération. Une critique sociale du temps*, Paris: La Découverte, 2010.
- Rosa, Hartmut, *Resonanz. Eine Soziologie der Weltbeziehung*, Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2016; French trans. *Résonance. Une sociologie de la relation au monde*, Paris: La Découverte, 2018.
- Ryan, Richard M., and Deci, Edward L., "Self-determination theory and the facilitation of intrinsic motivation, social development, and well-being," *American Psychologist*, vol. 55, no. 1, 2000, pp. 68–78.
- Schön, Donald A., *The Reflective Practitioner*, New York: Basic Books, 1983.
- Sherif, Muzafer, Harvey, O. J., White, B. Jack, Hood, William R., and Sherif, Carolyn W., *Intergroup Conflict and Cooperation: The Robbers Cave Experiment*, Norman: University of Oklahoma, 1961.
- Sherman, Lawrence W., and Strang, Heather, *Restorative Justice: The Evidence*, London: The Smith Institute, 2007.
- Strang, Heather, et al., "Restorative Justice Conferencing (RJC) Using Face-to-Face Meetings of Offenders and Victims: Effects on Offender Recidivism and Victim Satisfaction. A Systematic Review," *Campbell Systematic Reviews*, vol. 9, no. 1, 2013.
- Strathern, Marilyn, "'Improving ratings': audit in the British University system," *European Review*, vol. 5, no. 3, 1997, pp. 305–321.
- Tajfel, Henri, "Experiments in Intergroup Discrimination," *Scientific American*, vol. 223, no. 5, 1970, pp. 96–102.
- Tajfel, Henri, Billig, Michael, Bundy, R. P., and Flament, Claude, "Social categorization and intergroup behaviour," *European Journal of Social Psychology*, vol. 1, no. 2, 1971, pp. 149–178.
- van Gennep, Arnold, *Les Rites de passage*, Paris: Émile Nourry, 1909.
- Wenger, Étienne, *Communities of Practice: Learning, Meaning, and Identity*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998.

E.5 Life and Systems Sciences

- Ashby, W. Ross, *An Introduction to Cybernetics*, London: Chapman & Hall, 1956.
- Bateson, Gregory, *Mind and Nature: A Necessary Unity*, New York: Dutton, 1979; French trans. *La Nature et la Pensée*, Paris: Seuil, 1984.
- Bennett, Matthew, et al., "Huygens's clocks," *Proceedings of the Royal Society* A, vol. 458, 2002, pp. 563–579.
- Bernard, Claude, *Leçons sur les phénomènes de la vie communs aux animaux et aux végétaux*, Paris: J.-B. Baillière, 2 vols., 1878–1879.
- Bertalanffy, Ludwig von, "The theory of open systems in physics and biology," *Science*, vol. 111, 1950.
- Bertalanffy, Ludwig von, *General System Theory*, New York: Braziller, 1968.
- Cannon, Walter B., "Physiological regulation of normal states: some tentative postulates concerning biological homeostatics," in A. Pettit (ed.), *À Charles Richet: ses amis, ses collègues, ses élèves*, Paris: Éditions médicales, 1926.
- Cannon, Walter B., *The Wisdom of the Body*, New York: Norton, 1932.

- Centola, Damon, Becker, Joshua, Brackbill, Devon, and Baronchelli, Andrea, "Experimental evidence for tipping points in social convention," *Science*, vol. 360, no. 6393, 2018, pp. 1116–1119.
- Crippa, Monica, et al., "Food systems are responsible for a third of global anthropogenic GHG emissions," *Nature Food*, vol. 2, 2021, pp. 198–209.
- Dallard, Pat, et al., "The London Millennium Footbridge," *The Structural Engineer*, vol. 79, no. 22, 2001.
- Damasio, Antonio R., *L'Erreur de Descartes*, Paris: Odile Jacob, 1995 (orig.: *Descartes' Error: Emotion, Reason, and the Human Brain*, New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1994).
- Damasio, Antonio R., *L'Ordre étrange des choses. La vie, les sentiments et la fabrique de la culture*, Paris: Odile Jacob, 2017 (English ed.: *The Strange Order of Things: Life, Feeling, and the Making of Cultures*, New York: Pantheon Books, 2018).
- Gunderson, Lance H., and Holling, C. S. (eds.), *Panarchy: Understanding Transformations in Human and Natural Systems*, Washington: Island Press, 2002.
- Hochner, Binyamin, "An Embodied View of Octopus Neurobiology," *Current Biology*, vol. 22, no. 20, 2012, pp. R887–R892.
- Holling, C. S., "Resilience and Stability of Ecological Systems," *Annual Review of Ecology and Systematics*, vol. 4, 1973, pp. 1–23.
- Holling, C. S., "Engineering Resilience versus Ecological Resilience," in Peter C. Schulze (ed.), *Engineering Within Ecological Constraints*, Washington, DC: National Academy Press, 1996, pp. 31–44.
- Holling, C. S., "Understanding the Complexity of Economic, Ecological, and Social Systems," *Ecosystems*, vol. 4, 2001, pp. 390–405.
- Huygens, Christiaan, *Horologium*, The Hague, 1658; *Horologium oscillatorium*, Paris, 1673.
- Huygens, Christiaan, *Œuvres complètes*, The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, vol. V, *Correspondance 1664-1665*, 1893; vol. XVII, *L'horloge à pendule 1656-1666*, 1932.
- IUPAC, *Compendium of Chemical Terminology* ("Gold Book"), s.v. "catalyst," based on "A glossary of terms used in chemical kinetics, including reaction dynamics (IUPAC Recommendations 1996)," *Pure and Applied Chemistry*, vol. 68, 1996, p. 149.
- Lawrence, Michael, Homer-Dixon, Thomas, Janzwood, Scott, Rockström, Johan, Renn, Ortwin, and Donges, Jonathan F., "Global polycrisis: the causal mechanisms of crisis entanglement," *Global Sustainability*, vol. 7, 2024, e6.
- Low, Philip, et al., *The Cambridge Declaration on Consciousness*, Cambridge: Francis Crick Memorial Conference, July 7, 2012.
- Maturana, Humberto, and Varela, Francisco, *De máquinas y seres vivos*, Santiago: Editorial Universitaria, 1972.
- Maturana, Humberto, and Varela, Francisco, *L'Arbre de la connaissance*, Paris: Addison-Wesley France, 1994 (Spanish orig. 1984).
- McEwen, Bruce S., "Protective and damaging effects of stress mediators," *New England Journal of Medicine*, vol. 338, no. 3, 1998, pp. 171–179.
- Micklin, Philip, "The Aral Sea Disaster," *Annual Review of Earth and Planetary Sciences*, vol. 35, 2007, pp. 47–72.

- *New York Declaration on Animal Consciousness (The)*, New York: New York University, April 19, 2024.
- Prigogine, Ilya, and Stengers, Isabelle, *La Nouvelle Alliance*, Paris: Gallimard, 1979.
- Reed, Bill, "Shifting from 'sustainability' to regeneration," *Building Research & Information*, vol. 35, no. 6, 2007, pp. 674–680.
- Richardson, Katherine, et al., "Earth beyond six of nine planetary boundaries," *Science Advances*, vol. 9, no. 37, 2023, eadh2458.
- Rockström, Johan, et al., "A safe operating space for humanity," *Nature*, vol. 461, 2009, pp. 472–475.
- Sterling, Peter, and Eyer, Joseph, "Allostasis: a new paradigm to explain arousal pathology," in S. Fisher and J. Reason (eds.), *Handbook of Life Stress, Cognition, and Health*, New York: Wiley, 1988, pp. 629–649.
- Strogatz, Steven H., et al., "Crowd synchrony on the Millennium Bridge," *Nature*, vol. 438, 2005, pp. 43–44.
- Sun, Ya-Yen, Faturay, Futu, Lenzen, Manfred, Gössling, Stefan, and Higham, James, "Drivers of global tourism carbon emissions," *Nature Communications*, vol. 15, 2024, art. 10384.
- Wiener, Norbert, *Cybernetics, or Control and Communication in the Animal and the Machine*, Paris: Hermann; Cambridge, MA: The Technology Press; New York: Wiley, 1948.

E.6 History, Cycles, and Civilizations

- Āryabhaṭa, *Āryabhaṭīya* (499 CE), English trans. Walter Eugene Clark, *The Āryabhaṭīya of Āryabhaṭa*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1930.
- Bierhorst, John (trans.), *History and Mythology of the Aztecs: The Codex Chimalpopoca*, Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1992 (including the *Leyenda de los Soles*, 1558).
- Boyer, Régis (trans.), *L'Edda poétique*, Paris: Fayard, 1992 (including the *Völuspá*).
- Cereti, Carlo G., *The Zand ī Wahman Yasn. A Zoroastrian Apocalypse*, Rome: IsMEO, 1995.
- Courlander, Harold, *The Fourth World of the Hopis*, New York: Crown, 1971.
- Eliade, Mircea, *Le Mythe de l'éternel retour. Archétypes et répétition*, Paris: Gallimard, 1949.
- Geertz, Armin W., *The Invention of Prophecy. Continuity and Meaning in Hopi Indian Religion*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994.
- González-Reimann, Luis, *The Mahābhārata and the Yugas*, New York: Peter Lang, 2002.
- Guénon, René, *La Crise du monde moderne*, Paris: Bossard, 1927; repr. Paris: Gallimard, "Folio essais."
- Guénon, René, *Formes traditionnelles et cycles cosmiques*, Paris: Gallimard, 1970.
- Hesiod, *Les Travaux et les Jours*, trans. Paul Mazon, Paris: Les Belles Lettres (CUF), 1928.
- Howe, Neil, *The Fourth Turning Is Here*, New York: Simon & Schuster, 2023.
- Ibn Khaldun, *Muqaddima*, English trans. Franz Rosenthal, *The Muqaddimah*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1958; French trans. Abdesselam Cheddadi, *Le Livre des exemples*, Paris: Gallimard, "Bibliothèque de la Pléiade," 2002.
- Kondratiev, Nikolai D., "Les grands cycles de la conjoncture" (1925; German trans. 1926).

- Momigliano, Arnaldo, "Time in Ancient Historiography," *History and Theory*, Beiheft 6, 1966, pp. 1–23.
- Olivelle, Patrick (trans.), *Manu's Code of Law*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005.
- Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, book I.
- Perez, Carlota, *Technological Revolutions and Financial Capital. The Dynamics of Bubbles and Golden Ages*, Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, 2002.
- Pinker, Steven, *Le Triomphe des Lumières*, Paris: Les Arènes, 2018 (orig.: *Enlightenment Now: The Case for Reason, Science, Humanism, and Progress*, New York: Viking, 2018).
- Rosling, Hans, with Rosling, Ola, and Rosling Rönnlund, Anna, *Factfulness*, Paris: Flammarion, 2019 (orig.: *Factfulness: Ten Reasons We're Wrong About the World—and Why Things Are Better Than You Think*, New York: Flatiron Books, 2018).
- Sedgwick, Mark, *Against the Modern World. Traditionalism and the Secret Intellectual History of the Twentieth Century*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004.
- Snorri Sturluson, *Gylfaginning* (Prose *Edda*).
- Sorokin, Pitirim A., *Social and Cultural Dynamics*, 4 vols., New York: American Book Company, 1937–1941.
- Sorokin, Pitirim A., *The Crisis of Our Age*, New York: Dutton, 1941.
- Strauss, William, and Howe, Neil, *The Fourth Turning. An American Prophecy*, New York: Broadway Books, 1997.
- Stuart, David, *The Order of Days. The Maya World and the Truth about 2012*, New York: Harmony Books, 2011.
- Sundermann, Werner, "Bahman Yašt," *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, vol. III, fasc. 5, 1988.
- Turchin, Peter, "Political instability may be a contributor in the coming decade," *Nature*, vol. 463, 2010, p. 608.
- Turchin, Peter, *Ages of Discord*, Chaplin, CT: Beresta Books, 2016.
- Turchin, Peter, *End Times. Elites, Counter-Elites, and the Path of Political Disintegration*, New York: Penguin Press, 2023.
- Turchin, Peter, and Korotayev, Andrey, "The 2010 structural-demographic forecast for the 2010–2020 decade: A retrospective assessment," *PLoS ONE*, vol. 15, no. 8, 2020, e0237458.
- Turchin, Peter, and Nefedov, Sergey A., *Secular Cycles*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009.
- Vernant, Jean-Pierre, *Mythe et pensée chez les Grecs*, Paris: Maspero, 1965.
- Vico, Giambattista, *La Science nouvelle* (1744), trans. Alain Pons, Paris: Fayard, 2001.
- Waters, Frank, *Book of the Hopi*, New York: Viking, 1963.
- Weber, Max, *L'Éthique protestante et l'esprit du capitalisme*, trans. Jean-Pierre Grossein, Paris: Gallimard, 2003 (orig. 1904–1905).
- Wilson, Horace Hayman (trans.), *The Vishnu Purana*, London, 1840.
- Yukteswar Giri, Swami Sri, *The Holy Science* (*Kaivalya Darsanam*), 1894; French trans. *La Science sacrée*, Self-Realization Fellowship.

E.7 Religions and Wisdom Traditions

Texts

- *La Sainte Bible*, trans. Louis Segond, 1910.
- *Le Coran*, trans. Muhammad Hamidullah.
- *Bhagavad Gita*.
- Ganguli, Kisari Mohan (trans.), *The Mahabharata*, Calcutta, 1883–1896.
- Bodhi, Bhikkhu (trans.), *The Connected Discourses of the Buddha* (*Saṃyutta Nikāya*), Boston: Wisdom, 2000.
- *Aṅguttara Nikāya*; *Dhammapada* (English trans. by Thanissaro Bhikkhu, Ñāṇamoli Thera, and Acharya Buddharakkhita).
- Mishnah, *Avot* (*Pirkei Avot*, Ethics of the Fathers) and *Gittin*; Babylonian Talmud, *Shabbat* 31a.
- Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah*, "Laws of Gifts to the Poor" (*Matnot Aniyim*).
- al-Bukhari, *Sahih*; Muslim, *Sahih*; al-Nawawi, *The Forty Hadith*.
- Laozi, *Tao Te King. Le Livre de la voie et de la vertu*, trans. Stanislas Julien, Paris: Imprimerie royale, 1842.
- Liou Kia-hway (trans.), *Philosophes taoïstes*, Paris: Gallimard, "Bibliothèque de la Pléiade," 1980.
- Legge, James (trans.), *The Chinese Classics*, vol. I, *The Doctrine of the Mean* (*Zhongyong*), Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1893.
- Confucius, *Analects* (*Lunyu*).
- Zhang Zai, *Ximing* ("Western Inscription"), eleventh century.
- Barguet, Paul (trans.), *Le Livre des morts des anciens Égyptiens*, Paris: Cerf, 1967.
- *Rule of Saint Benedict*.
- Parker, Arthur C., *The Constitution of the Five Nations, or The Iroquois Book of the Great Law*, New York State Museum Bulletin no. 184, Albany: University of the State of New York, 1916.

Magisterium and Declarations

- Leo XIII, *Rerum novarum*, encyclical letter, May 15, 1891.
- Pius XI, *Quadragesimo anno*, encyclical letter, May 15, 1931.
- Francis, *Laudato si'*, encyclical letter, May 24, 2015.
- Francis and Ahmad Al-Tayyeb, *Document on Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together*, Abu Dhabi, February 4, 2019.
- *Islamic Declaration on Global Climate Change*, Istanbul, August 18, 2015.
- Parliament of the World's Religions, *Declaration Toward a Global Ethic*, Chicago, September 4, 1993; see Küng, Hans, and Kuschel, Karl-Josef (eds.), *Manifeste pour une éthique planétaire*, Paris: Cerf, 1995.
- *Rome Call for AI Ethics*, Rome, February 28, 2020.
- *The Earth Charter*, 2000 (official French version: *Charte de la Terre*).

Studies

- Assmann, Jan, *Maât, l'Égypte pharaonique et l'idée de justice sociale*, Paris: Julliard, 1989; *Ma'at. Gerechtigkeit und Unsterblichkeit im Alten Ägypten*, Munich: C. H. Beck, 1990.
- Auda, Jasser, *Maqasid al-Shariah as Philosophy of Islamic Law*, London and Washington: IIIT, 2008.
- Cheng, Anne, *Histoire de la pensée chinoise*, Paris: Seuil, 1997.
- Dundas, Paul, *The Jains*, 2nd ed., London: Routledge, 2002.
- Idel, Moshe, *Kabbalah. New Perspectives*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988.
- Mbiti, John S., *African Religions and Philosophy*, London: Heinemann, 1969.
- Scholem, Gershom, *Les Grands Courants de la mystique juive*, trans. Marie-Madeleine Davy, Paris: Payot, 1950 (orig.: *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, Jerusalem: Schocken, 1941).
- Tutu, Desmond, *No Future Without Forgiveness*, New York: Doubleday, 1999.

E.8 Art, Beauty, Proportion

Proportion, the Golden Ratio, Architecture

- Alberti, Leon Battista, *De re aedificatoria*; French trans. Pierre Caye and Françoise Choay, *L'Art d'édifier*, Paris: Seuil, 2004.
- Boethius, *De institutione musica.*
- Douady, Stéphane, and Couder, Yves, "Phyllotaxis as a physical self-organized growth process," *Physical Review Letters*, vol. 68, no. 13, 1992, pp. 2098–2101.
- Euclid, *Les Éléments*, trans. Bernard Vitrac, Paris: PUF, 1990–2001.
- Falbo, Clement, "The Golden Ratio — A Contrary Viewpoint," *The College Mathematics Journal*, vol. 36, no. 2, 2005, pp. 123–134.
- Ghyka, Matila C., *Le Nombre d'or. Rites et rythmes pythagoriciens dans le développement de la civilisation occidentale*, Paris: Gallimard, 1931.
- Krautheimer, Richard, "Introduction to an 'Iconography of Mediaeval Architecture,'" *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, vol. 5, 1942, pp. 1–33.
- Le Corbusier, *Le Modulor*, Boulogne-sur-Seine: Éditions de l'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui, 1950; *Modulor 2*, 1955.
- Leonardo Pisano (Fibonacci), *Liber abaci*, 1202 (2nd ed. 1228).
- Livio, Mario, *The Golden Ratio: The Story of Phi, the World's Most Astonishing Number*, New York: Broadway Books, 2002.
- Lucian of Samosata, *Pro lapsu inter salutandum.*
- Markowsky, George, "Misconceptions about the Golden Ratio," *The College Mathematics Journal*, vol. 23, no. 1, 1992, pp. 2–19.
- Nicomachus of Gerasa, *Manual of Harmonics.*
- Ohm, Martin, *Die reine Elementar-Mathematik*, 2nd ed., Berlin, 1835.
- Pacioli, Luca, *De divina proportione*, Venice: Paganino Paganini, 1509.

- Pallett, Pamela M., Link, Stephen, and Lee, Kang, "New 'golden' ratios for facial beauty," *Vision Research*, vol. 50, no. 2, 2010, pp. 149–154.
- Swinton, Jonathan, Ochu, Erinma, and The MSI Turing's Sunflower Consortium, "Novel Fibonacci and non-Fibonacci structure in the sunflower: results of a citizen science experiment," *Royal Society Open Science*, vol. 3, no. 5, 2016, 160091.
- Vitruvius, *De architectura*.
- Zeising, Adolf, *Neue Lehre von den Proportionen des menschlichen Körpers*, Leipzig, 1854.

Leonardo da Vinci

- Heydenreich, Ludwig Heinrich, *Leonardo da Vinci*, Basel: Holbein, 1954.
- Isaacson, Walter, *Leonardo da Vinci*, New York: Simon & Schuster, 2017; French trans. *Léonard de Vinci. La biographie*, Lausanne: Quanto, 2019.
- Richter, Jean Paul (ed.), *The Literary Works of Leonardo da Vinci*, London, 1883, 2 vols.

Beauty, Nature, and Well-Being

- Ulrich, Roger S., "View through a window may influence recovery from surgery," *Science*, vol. 224, no. 4647, 1984, pp. 420–421.
- Wilson, Edward O., *Biophilia*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984.

Literature

- Buechner, Frederick, *Wishful Thinking: A Theological ABC*, New York: Harper & Row, 1973.
- Dostoevsky, Fyodor, *L'Idiot* (1868–1869), trans. André Markowicz, Arles: Actes Sud, "Babel."
- Hölderlin, Friedrich, *Patmos* (1803).
- Machado, Antonio, *Campos de Castilla*, Madrid: Renacimiento, 1912 (first edition; "Caminante, no hay camino" appears only in the expanded editions).
- Pope, Alexander, *An Essay on Man* (1733).
- Shaw, George Bernard, *Man and Superman* (1903).
- Terence, *Heautontimorumenos*.
- Voltaire, *Candide ou l'Optimisme*, [Geneva: Cramer], 1759.

E.9 AI and Technology

- Bainbridge, Lisanne, "Ironies of Automation," *Automatica*, vol. 19, no. 6, 1983, pp. 775–779.
- Buolamwini, Joy, and Gebru, Timnit, "Gender Shades: Intersectional Accuracy Disparities in Commercial Gender Classification," *Proceedings of Machine Learning Research*, vol. 81, 2018, pp. 77–91.
- Future of Life Institute, *Asilomar AI Principles*, Asilomar, California, January 2017.
- G7, *Hiroshima Process International Guiding Principles for Advanced AI Systems* and *International Code of Conduct for Organizations Developing Advanced AI Systems*, October 30, 2023.
- *The Bletchley Declaration*, November 1, 2023; *Seoul Declaration*, May 21, 2024; *Statement on Inclusive and Sustainable Artificial Intelligence for People and the Planet*, Paris, February 11, 2025; *AI Impact Summit*, New Delhi, February 2026.

- Kosmyna, Nataliya, et al., "Your Brain on ChatGPT: Accumulation of Cognitive Debt when Using an AI Assistant for Essay Writing Task," arXiv preprint arXiv:2506.08872, MIT Media Lab, 2025.
- Kranzberg, Melvin, "Technology and History: 'Kranzberg's Laws,'" *Technology and Culture*, vol. 27, no. 3, 1986, pp. 544–560.
- Mark, Gloria, *Attention Span: A Groundbreaking Way to Restore Balance, Happiness and Productivity*, Toronto: Hanover Square Press, 2023.
- OECD, *Recommendation of the Council on Artificial Intelligence*, OECD/LEGAL/0449, May 22, 2019, revised May 2024.
- Parasuraman, Raja, and Riley, Victor, "Humans and Automation: Use, Misuse, Disuse, Abuse," *Human Factors*, vol. 39, no. 2, 1997, pp. 230–253.
- Simon, Herbert A., "Designing Organizations for an Information-Rich World," in Martin Greenberger (ed.), *Computers, Communications, and the Public Interest*, Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1971, pp. 37–52.
- UNESCO, *Recommendation on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence*, Paris: UNESCO, November 23, 2021.
- Vosoughi, Soroush, Roy, Deb, and Aral, Sinan, "The spread of true and false news online," *Science*, vol. 359, no. 6380, 2018, pp. 1146–1151.

E.10 Reports and Data

Climate, the Living World, and Resources

- Circle Economy, *The Circularity Gap Report* 2025, Amsterdam: Circle Economy, 2025.
- United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, *Global Land Outlook*, 2nd ed., Bonn: UNCCD, 2022.
- Copernicus Climate Change Service (C3S), *Global Climate Highlights* 2024, January 2025; *Global Climate Highlights* 2025, January 14, 2026.
- Global Commission on the Economics of Water, *The Economics of Water: Valuing the Hydrological Cycle as a Global Common Good*, 2024.
- Global Footprint Network, *Country Overshoot Days* 2026, 2026.
- IPBES, *Rapport de l'évaluation mondiale de la biodiversité et des services écosystémiques. Résumé à l'intention des décideurs*, Bonn: IPBES Secretariat, 2019 (English orig.: *Summary for Policymakers of the Global Assessment Report on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services*, Bonn: IPBES Secretariat, 2019).
- World Meteorological Organization, *State of the Global Climate* 2024, Geneva: WMO, March 2025; *State of the Global Climate* 2025, Geneva: WMO, March 23, 2026.
- WMO, UNEP, NOAA, NASA, and European Commission, *Scientific Assessment of Ozone Depletion:* 2022, Geneva: WMO, 2023.
- Planetary Boundaries Science Lab, *Planetary Health Check* 2025, Potsdam: Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research, September 24, 2025; *Planetary Health Check* 2026, September 21, 2026.
- UNEP, *Food Waste Index Report* 2024, Nairobi: UNEP, March 2024.

- UNEP, International Resource Panel, *Global Resources Outlook* 2024, Nairobi: UNEP, 2024.
- UNEP and Global Alliance for Buildings and Construction, *Global Status Report for Buildings and Construction* 2024/2025, Nairobi: UNEP, 2025.
- Rainforest Action Network, BankTrack, et al., *Banking on Climate Chaos* 2026, 2026.
- ITU and UNITAR, *The Global E-waste Monitor* 2024, Geneva and Bonn, 2024.
- WWF, *Living Planet Report* 2024 – A *System in Peril*, Gland: WWF, 2024.

Economy, Inequality, and Development

- International Monetary Fund, 2025 *Global Debt Monitor*, Washington: IMF, September 2025.
- International Monetary Fund, *World Economic Outlook: Global Economy in the Shadow of War*, Washington: IMF, April 14, 2026.
- Gould, Elise, Bivens, Josh, and Kandra, Jori, "CEO pay increased in 2024 and is now 281 times that of the typical worker," Washington: Economic Policy Institute, September 25, 2025.
- Institute of International Finance, *Global Debt Monitor*, Washington: IIF, 2026.
- Kuznets, Simon, *National Income*, 1929–1932, Senate Document no. 124, 73rd Congress, Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1934.
- Meadows, Donella, *Indicators and Information Systems for Sustainable Development*, report to the Balaton Group, Hartland, VT: The Sustainability Institute, September 1998.
- United Nations, *The Sustainable Development Goals Report* 2025, New York: United Nations, 2025.
- New Zealand Treasury, *The Wellbeing Budget* 2019, Wellington, May 30, 2019.
- OECD, *How's Life?* 2020: *Measuring Well-being*, Paris: OECD Publishing, 2020; *How's Life?* 2024: *Well-being and Resilience in Times of Crisis*, Paris: OECD Publishing, 2024.
- OECD, *Better Life Index* (Better Life Initiative), Paris: OECD, since 2011.
- OECD, *OECD Guidelines on Measuring Subjective Well-being*, Paris: OECD Publishing, 2013.
- Oxfam International, *Resisting the Rule of the Rich: Protecting Freedom from Billionaire Power*, Oxford: Oxfam, January 19, 2026.
- UNDP, *Human Development Report* 1990, New York: Oxford University Press, 1990.
- Stiglitz, Joseph E., Sen, Amartya, and Fitoussi, Jean-Paul, *Rapport de la Commission sur la mesure des performances économiques et du progrès social*, Paris, 2009 (English version: *Report by the Commission on the Measurement of Economic Performance and Social Progress*, Paris, 2009).
- United Nations Global Compact et al., *Who Cares Wins: Connecting Financial Markets to a Changing World*, 2004.
- World Inequality Lab, Chancel, Lucas, Gómez-Carrera, Ricardo, Moshrif, Rowaida, and Piketty, Thomas (eds.), *World Inequality Report* 2026, Paris: World Inequality Lab, December 10, 2025.

Energy and Artificial Intelligence

- International Energy Agency, *Energy and AI*, Paris: IEA, April 2025.
- International Energy Agency, *Global Energy Review* 2026, Paris: IEA, 2026.
- IEA, IRENA, United Nations Statistics Division, World Bank, and WHO, *Tracking SDG 7: The Energy Progress Report* 2025, June 2025.

- Gmyrek, Paweł, et al., *Generative AI and Jobs: A Refined Global Index of Occupational Exposure*, ILO Working Paper, Geneva: ILO, May 2025.
- OECD, *Perspectives de l'emploi de l'OCDE 2023: intelligence artificielle et marché du travail*, Paris: Éditions OCDE, 2023, https://doi.org/10.1787/aae5dba0-fr (English ed.: *OECD Employment Outlook 2023: Artificial Intelligence and the Labour Market*, Paris: OECD Publishing, 2023).
- Stanford Institute for Human-Centered Artificial Intelligence, *The 2025 AI Index Report*, Stanford: Stanford HAI, April 2025; *AI Index Report 2026*, April 13, 2026.

Health, Social Connection, Work

- Gallup, *State of the Global Workplace: 2026 Report*, Washington: Gallup, 2026.
- World Health Organization, *From loneliness to social connection: charting a path to healthier societies. Report of the WHO Commission on Social Connection*, Geneva: WHO, June 30, 2025.
- World Health Organization, *World mental health today* and *Mental Health Atlas 2024*, Geneva: WHO, 2025.
- World Health Organization, *WHO guidelines on mental health at work*, Geneva: WHO, 2022; WHO and ILO, *Mental health at work: policy brief*, 2022.
- World Health Organization, *Guidelines on physical activity, sedentary behaviour and sleep for children under 5 years of age*, Geneva: WHO, 2019.
- World Health Organization, *The World Health Organization-Five Well-Being Index* (WHO-5), Geneva: WHO, 2024.
- World Health Organization, *Global status report on road safety 2023*, Geneva: WHO, 2023.
- One Health High-Level Expert Panel (OHHLEP), definition of the *One Health* approach, adopted by FAO, WOAH, UNEP, and WHO, December 1, 2021.
- WHO and UNICEF, Joint Monitoring Programme (JMP), *Progress on household drinking water, sanitation and hygiene 2000–2024*, 2025.
- Topp, Christian Winther, Østergaard, Søren Dinesen, Søndergaard, Susan, and Bech, Per, "The WHO-5 Well-Being Index: A Systematic Review of the Literature," *Psychotherapy and Psychosomatics*, vol. 84, no. 3, 2015, pp. 167–176.

Democracy, Trust, Information, Culture

- Edelman, *2026 Edelman Trust Barometer: Trust Amid Insularity*, January 2026.
- World Economic Forum, *Global Risks Report 2026*, 21st ed., Geneva: WEF, January 14, 2026.
- Newman, Nic, et al., *Reuters Institute Digital News Report 2025*, Oxford: Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism, 2025.
- OECD, *OECD Survey on Drivers of Trust in Public Institutions – 2024 Results: Building Trust in a Complex Policy Environment*, Paris: OECD Publishing, 2024.
- Open Society Institute – Sofia, *Media Literacy Index 2026*, Sofia, January 2026.
- Pew Research Center, "How the Global Religious Landscape Changed From 2010 to 2020," Washington, June 9, 2025.
- Reporters sans frontières (Reporters Without Borders), *Classement mondial de la liberté de la presse 2025*, Paris: RSF, May 2025.

- V-Dem Institute, *Democracy Report 2026: Unraveling the Democratic Era?*, Gothenburg: University of Gothenburg, March 2026.
- World Justice Project, *Rule of Law Index 2025*, Washington: WJP, 2025.

Education, Participation, and Public Policy

- World Bank, *Empowerment Case Studies: Participatory Budgeting in Brazil*, Washington: World Bank, n.d.
- Citizens' Assembly (Ireland), *First Report and Recommendations of the Citizens' Assembly: The Eighth Amendment of the Constitution*, Dublin, June 29, 2017.
- Citizens' Convention for Climate (*Convention citoyenne pour le climat*), *Rapport final*, Paris, June 2020.
- Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture, *Media literacy in Finland — National media education policy*, Helsinki, 2019.
- Department for Education (United Kingdom), *PISA 2022: National Report for England*, London, December 2023.
- OECD, *Résultats du PISA 2022 (Volume I)*, Paris: Éditions OCDE, 2023 (English ed.: *PISA 2022 Results (Volume I): The State of Learning and Equity in Education*, Paris: OECD Publishing, 2023).
- Opetushallitus (Finnish National Agency for Education), *National Core Curriculum for Basic Education 2014*, Helsinki, 2014.
- UN Tourism, *Baromètre du tourisme mondial*, Madrid, January 2025 (English ed.: *World Tourism Barometer*).

Switzerland

- Association des Communes Suisses (Swiss Association of Municipalities), "Statistique des communes actualisée pour l'année 2026," January 6, 2026.
- Swiss Public Sector Financial Reporting Advisory Committee (SRS-CSPCP), Harmonized Accounting Model 2 (HAM2), "Annexe C | Indicateurs financiers: Définitions et calculs," version of January 31, 2025.
- Fischer, Adrian, Lamprecht, Markus, and Stamm, Hanspeter, *Observatoire du bénévolat en Suisse 2025*, Zurich and Geneva: Seismo, 2025.
- Fust, Alexander, et al., *Schweizer KMU. Eine Analyse der aktuellsten Zahlen*, OBT and KMU-HSG, 2024.
- Federal Office for the Environment (FOEN), *Switzerland's Greenhouse Gas Inventory* (2024 data), Bern, 2026.
- Federal Statistical Office (FSO), MONET 2030 indicator system; Statistics on Enterprise Structure (STATENT); "Unpaid work" module of the Swiss Labour Force Survey (2020), Neuchâtel.
- Federal Office for Spatial Development (ARE), *Cercle Indicateurs: indicateurs de développement durable pour les cantons et les villes*, Bern, 2025.
- State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation (SERI), "Formation professionnelle initiale," web page, accessed September 30, 2026.

Europe

- Eurostat, "Structural business statistics overview," *Statistics Explained*, Luxembourg (2023 data).
- Eurostat, "9.2% of EU population struggled to keep their home warm," Luxembourg, February 2, 2026.

E.11 Legal and Normative Texts

International Law and United Nations Instruments

- United Nations General Assembly, *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, December 10, 1948.
- United Nations General Assembly, resolution A/RES/70/1, *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, September 25, 2015.
- United Nations General Assembly, resolution A/RES/79/1, *The Pact for the Future*, September 22, 2024 (annexes: Global Digital Compact; Declaration on Future Generations).
- United Nations Human Rights Council, resolution 17/4 of June 16, 2011; *Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights*, New York and Geneva: OHCHR, 2011.
- Convention on Biological Diversity, decision 15/4, *Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework*, December 19, 2022.
- Council of Europe, *Framework Convention on Artificial Intelligence and Human Rights, Democracy and the Rule of Law* (CETS No. 225), Vilnius, September 5, 2024.
- European Court of Human Rights (Grand Chamber), *Verein KlimaSeniorinnen Schweiz and Others v. Switzerland*, application no. 53600/20, judgment of April 9, 2024.
- International Court of Justice, *Obligations of States in respect of Climate Change*, advisory opinion of July 23, 2025.
- UNESCO, *Recommendation on Education for Peace, Human Rights and Sustainable Development*, Paris: UNESCO, November 2023.
- UNEP Finance Initiative, *Principles for Sustainable Insurance*, Rio de Janeiro, June 2012.
- Fribourg Group, *Les droits culturels. Déclaration de Fribourg*, Fribourg: IIEDH, University of Fribourg, May 7, 2007.

Standards

- ISO 26000:2010, *Guidance on social responsibility*, Geneva: International Organization for Standardization, 2010.
- ISO 14040:2006, *Environmental management — Life cycle assessment — Principles and framework*; ISO 14044:2006, *Requirements and guidelines*, Geneva: ISO, 2006.
- CEN, CWA 17493:2019 — *Journalism Trust Initiative*, Brussels: CEN, December 2019.
- ISO 30414:2025, *Human resource management — Requirements and recommendations for human capital reporting and disclosure*, Geneva: ISO, 2025 (replaces ISO 30414:2018).
- ISO 37002:2021, *Whistleblowing management systems — Guidelines*, Geneva: ISO, 2021.
- ISO 45003:2021, *Occupational health and safety management — Psychological health and safety at work — Guidelines for managing psychosocial risks*, Geneva: ISO, 2021.

- Global Reporting Initiative, *GRI 2: General Disclosures 2021*; *GRI 405: Diversity and Equal Opportunity 2016*.
- World Resources Institute and World Business Council for Sustainable Development, *GHG Protocol Corporate Accounting and Reporting Standard*; *Corporate Value Chain (Scope 3) Standard*.
- United Nations Statistics Division, global indicator framework for the Sustainable Development Goals and indicator metadata sheets (unstats.un.org).

Switzerland

- Federal Constitution of the Swiss Confederation of April 18, 1999 (SR 101), in particular the preamble and Arts. 5a, 15, 28, 43a, 72, 80, 104a, 120, 139, and 141.
- Code of Obligations (SR 220), Arts. 828 et seq. (cooperatives) and Arts. 964a et seq. (transparency and due diligence).
- Animal Welfare Act of December 16, 2005 (SR 455) and Animal Welfare Ordinance (SR 455.1).
- Swiss Juvenile Criminal Procedure Code of March 20, 2009 (SR 312.1).
- Federal Act of June 21, 2019, on Public Procurement (SR 172.056.1).
- Federal Act on Gender Equality (GEA, SR 151.1), Arts. 13a et seq.
- Federal Act of September 25, 2020, on Data Protection (SR 235.1).
- Federal Act on the Reduction of Greenhouse Gas Emissions (CO_2 Act, SR 641.71).
- Federal Act on Agriculture (SR 910.1), Art. 70a.
- Ordinance of November 9, 2005, on the Supervision of Private Insurance Companies (SR 961.011).
- 1937 Agreement in the Swiss machine and metal industry (the "labor peace" agreement).
- Federal Council, preliminary draft of a federal act on sustainable corporate management, opened for consultation on April 2, 2026.
- Federal Chancellery, official results of the federal popular votes of March 3, 2013 (spatial planning; initiative "against abusive executive pay"), November 24, 2013 ("1:12" initiative), May 21, 2017 (Energy Act), September 24, 2017 (food security), November 29, 2020 (Responsible Business Initiative), June 18, 2023 (Climate and Innovation Act), June 9, 2024 (electricity supply), and November 24, 2024 (national highways); Année politique suisse, Swissvotes, University of Bern.
- City of Zurich, municipal votes of November 30, 2008 (2000-watt society) and of 2011 (policy article on housing policy); City of Zurich, "Wohnpolitik," web page, accessed September 30, 2026.

European Union

- European Commission, *A renewed EU strategy 2011-14 for Corporate Social Responsibility*, COM(2011) 681 final, October 25, 2011.
- Regulation (EU) 2016/679 (General Data Protection Regulation, GDPR).
- Regulation (EU) 2020/852 of June 18, 2020, on the establishment of a framework to facilitate sustainable investment (Taxonomy Regulation).
- Regulation (EU) 2022/2065 of October 19, 2022, on a Single Market for Digital Services (Digital Services Act, DSA).

- Directive (EU) 2019/1937 of October 23, 2019, on the protection of persons who report breaches of Union law.
- Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) 2023/1669 of June 16, 2023, with regard to the energy labelling of smartphones and slate tablets.
- Directive (EU) 2023/970 of May 10, 2023, to strengthen the application of the principle of equal pay (pay transparency).
- Directive (EU) 2024/825 of February 28, 2024, as regards empowering consumers for the green transition.
- Regulation (EU) 2024/1083 of April 11, 2024, establishing a common framework for media services in the internal market (European Media Freedom Act).
- Regulation (EU) 2024/1689 of June 13, 2024, laying down harmonised rules on artificial intelligence (AI Act).
- Directive (EU) 2024/1760 of June 13, 2024, on corporate sustainability due diligence.
- Regulation (EU) 2024/1781 of June 13, 2024, establishing a framework for the setting of ecodesign requirements for sustainable products.
- Directive (EU) 2024/1799 of June 13, 2024, on common rules promoting the repair of goods.
- Regulation (EU) 2024/1991 of June 24, 2024, on nature restoration.
- Directive (EU) 2026/470 of February 24, 2026 (“Omnibus I”), amending sustainability reporting and due diligence requirements.
- Regulation (EU) 2026/1744 of the European Parliament and of the Council of July 8, 2026 (“Digital Omnibus on AI”), *Official Journal of the European Union*, L, July 24, 2026.

France

- Loi n° 82-600 du 13 juillet 1982 relative à l’indemnisation des victimes de catastrophes naturelles.
- Loi n° 2014-856 du 31 juillet 2014 relative à l’économie sociale et solidaire.
- Loi n° 2014-896 du 15 août 2014 relative à l’individualisation des peines et renforçant l’efficacité des sanctions pénales.
- Loi n° 2016-1088 du 8 août 2016 relative au travail, à la modernisation du dialogue social et à la sécurisation des parcours professionnels.
- Loi n° 2017-399 du 27 mars 2017 relative au devoir de vigilance des sociétés mères et des entreprises donneuses d’ordre.
- Loi n° 2019-486 du 22 mai 2019 relative à la croissance et la transformation des entreprises (PACTE).
- Tribunal judiciaire de Paris (Paris Judicial Court), judgment of December 5, 2023, Fédération SUD PTT v. La Poste.

Other States

- Constitution of the Kingdom of Bhutan, 2008.
- Constitution of the Republic of Ecuador, 2008.
- Constitution of the Plurinational State of Bolivia, 2009.

- New Zealand, *Children, Young Persons, and Their Families Act 1989* (now the *Oranga Tamariki Act 1989*).
- New Zealand, *Te Awa Tupua (Whanganui River Claims Settlement) Act 2017*.
- Wales, *Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015*.
- United Kingdom, *Animal Welfare (Sentience) Act 2022*.
- United States, Securities and Exchange Commission, "Pay Ratio Disclosure," final rule of August 5, 2015 (Dodd-Frank Act, sec. 953(b)).

APPENDIX F

A Note on Method, Quotations, and Sources

A book that asks its readers to "answer and pass on" must begin by giving an account of how it was made. This note explains how the facts, figures, and quotations in this book were established and which conventions were followed.

F.1 How This Book Was Verified

Primary sources first. Every quotation from a third party refers, as far as possible, to the original text or to a standard edition: the fragments of the Presocratics in the Diels-Kranz edition, Aristotle in the Bekker numbering, Adam Smith in the Glasgow Edition, and biblical, Qur'anic, or Confucian texts in published, named translations. Data come from the organizations that produce them (WMO, Copernicus, IPBES, WHO, OECD, IMF, ILO, the United Nations, national statistical offices, etc.); legal texts come from official publications (Fedlex, EUR-Lex, official gazettes, and parliamentary websites); scientific findings come from the articles themselves, identified by their DOI wherever possible. References, ISBNs, and page numbers were checked, where necessary, against public bibliographic databases. Figures carry their year and their source; the most recent date from 2024 to 2026, and the book's reference date is September 30, 2026.

No collaborative encyclopedias, no quotation websites. At the author's express request, Wikipedia is never cited as a source. At most, it may have helped locate a primary source, which was then consulted and cited. The same applies to quotation websites, which are the origin of most false attributions.

Three reference texts read in full. The two companion texts and the SALTER guide were read in their entirety, and every quotation drawn from them was checked word for word by exact-string search: Ravi Chaudhry's *Capitalism to Peopleism* (printed page numbers of the 2024 edition), the encyclical *Magnifica Humanitas* (official text, by paragraph number), and *SALTER® — La boussole consciente pour un monde en mutation* [SALTER®: The conscious compass for a changing world] (2026). Paraphrases of these texts are identified as such; whatever appears in quotation marks is verbatim.

A source log and independent verification. For each chapter, a source log recorded every quotation and every nontrivial fact, with its exact reference and a status: "verified" (and how) or "caution" (and why). Each chapter was then reviewed by a fact-checker who had not written it and whose task was to doubt everything: the existence and accuracy of quotations, the fidelity of translations, figures, dates, titles, articles of law, results of popular votes, and the consistency of

terminology from one chapter to the next. Corrections and points still to be validated were recorded in reports. When a claim could not be verified, it was deleted or cautiously reworded; when a quotation could not be traced, it was not used.

What remains open. A few points are flagged in the notes: page numbers to be checked against a specific printed edition, data that their producers may revise, and quotations from recent works taken from reviews. We point them out rather than conceal them. Readers who spot an error are invited to report it: that is the very principle of a theory that aims to be open and perfectible (chapter 14).

F.2 Conventions

- **Translations.** Quotations whose original is in English are quoted directly from the original. When a published English translation of a text written in another language exists and has been used, it is named. Translations made for this book are marked "(our translation)"; for quotations translated from German or from an ancient language, the original text appears in the note.
- **Pages and numbering.** Page numbers refer to the edition indicated in the note. Classical texts are cited by their standard numbering (Diels-Kranz for the Presocratics, Stephanus for Plato, Bekker for Aristotle, book-chapter-paragraph for Smith, chapter and verse for the Bible, sura and verse for the Qur'an); *Magnifica Humanitas* by paragraph number (no.); *Capitalism to Peopleism* by printed page.
- **Pagination of *Capitalism to Peopleism*.** Page references are to the printed pagination of the Simon & Schuster India edition (2024), as it appears in the PDF file of the book that Ravi Chaudhry sent to the author in 2025. A later edition may have different pagination.
- **Length of quotations.** Quotations from works still under copyright are brief (twenty-five words at most); the rest is paraphrased and identified as such.
- **Paraphrases and fictional cases.** An idea summarized without quotation marks is attributed with care and marked "paraphrase" in the note. Examples invented to illustrate an approach are identified as "fictional illustrative cases"; real examples are sourced.
- **The author's own wording.** Sentences by David Fiorucci taken from his working documents are attributed to him; they are never presented as quotations from third parties.
- **Convergences, not endorsements.** The parallels drawn with *Magnifica Humanitas*, Peopleism, or other frameworks concern the criteria they share; they imply no mutual endorsement (appendix C).

F.3 Digital Tools and Responsibility

This book was prepared with the help of artificial intelligence tools, used for documentary research, the drafting of working versions, and the cross-checking of sources, under the direction of the author, who set its course and takes responsibility for its content. Their suggestions were subjected to the same rules as any other source: no quotation and no figure was retained without

verification—and several of the false attributions caught during verification came precisely from drafts produced by these tools. That is one more reason to apply to artificial intelligence what chapter 13 asks of it: transparency, and identifiable human responsibility.

APPENDIX G

About the Author and LP3 AG / SA

The Author



Photo: Oliver Oettli (www.oliveroettli.ch)

David Fiorucci, born in 1968 in Fribourg, Switzerland, a dual Swiss and Italian citizen, is a leadership expert, author, speaker, founder, and entrepreneur. Married since 1998 to Barbara Fiorucci-Huber, he is the father of three children.

He has held various management and executive positions in industry, services, the public sector, and finance, with more than thirty years of experience leading teams, in small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) as well as in large national and international companies. From 2012 to June 2016, he was a member of senior management at the Zurich headquarters of Swiss Life Switzerland, where he headed Learning & Development and supported the company's transformation. In 2016, he founded LP3.

He has led mandates, projects, and workshops in Switzerland (in all three of its main language regions), France, Germany, and Austria. His working languages are French, German, English, and Italian. He is a member of the advisory committee of the Association suisse pour la formation des cadres (Swiss Association for Management Training) and holds several mandates in higher education.

His four levers of impact: training and leadership (developing leaders who are aware of their impact); the private foundation "DFi David Fiorucci"; volunteering and philanthropy on behalf of the planet, its nature, its wildlife, and its inhabitants; and the project of the Cloister of Suspended Time, a place of retreat where consciousness can turn toward the themes that matter most for the individual and for society.

Books by the Author

- David Fiorucci & Thomas Nast, *Leader pour une économie durable — LP3 Leadership* [Leader for a sustainable economy], Bern: Stämpfli Verlag AG, 2017 (German original *Leader für eine nachhaltige Wirtschaft*, 2016).
- Thomas Nast & David Fiorucci, *Team für eine nachhaltige Wirtschaft — LP3 Leadership* [Team for a sustainable economy], Bern: Stämpfli Verlag AG, 2017.
- Thomas Nast & David Fiorucci, *Partner für eine nachhaltige Wirtschaft — LP3 Leadership* [Partners for a sustainable economy], Bern: Stämpfli Verlag AG, 2019.
- David Fiorucci & Thomas Nast, *Octocratie — Redonnons du sens aux organisations* [Octocracy: Restoring meaning to organizations], Bern: jahr+tag GmbH, 2024 (also available in German and English).
- David Fiorucci, *SALTER® — La boussole consciente pour un monde en mutation* [SALTER®: The conscious compass for a changing world], Biel/Bienne: LP3 AG / SA, 2026 (free publication, www.salter.ch).
- David Fiorucci, *Equiconscism — The Theory of Conscious Balance: For an Economy in the Service of Life*, Biel/Bienne: LP3 AG / SA, 2026, ISBN 978-3-9526757-4-8 (this white paper; French original *L'Équiconscisme*, ISBN 978-3-9526757-3-1; license CC BY-NC-SA 4.0).

LP3 AG / SA

LP3 AG / SA, headquartered in Biel/Bienne, has been developing approaches and programs at the intersection of leadership, organizational development, and conscious transformation since 2016:

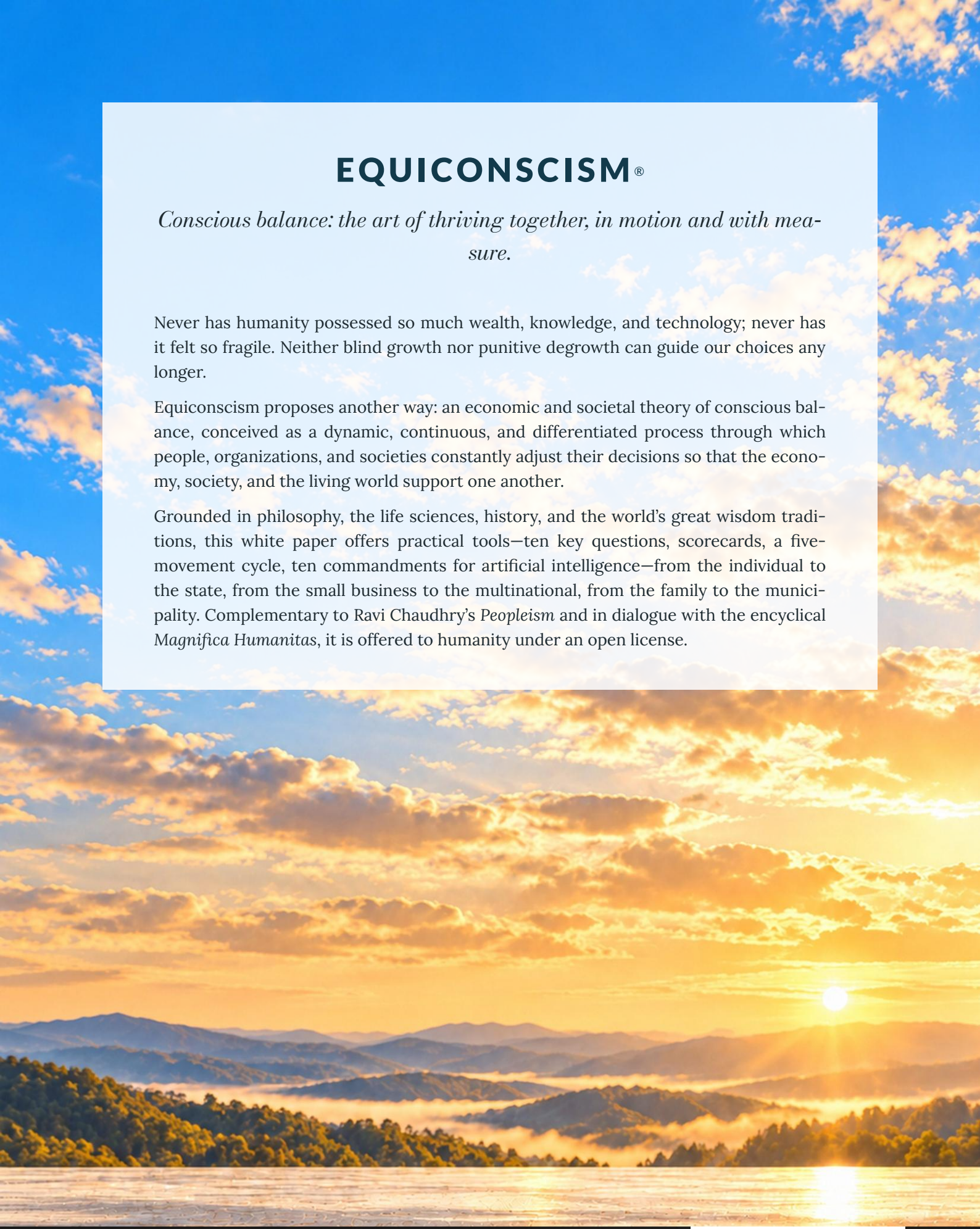
- **LP3®** — an approach to leadership: the ability to create movement and to mobilize people toward a common goal and an attractive vision; legitimate rather than formal power. Its name, LP³, reads as follows: the **L** stands for **Leadership**; the **P** to the power of three stands for **Potential**, **Power**, and **Performance**. Leaders who are aware of their strengths and of their areas for vigilance know their potential, exercise their power with greater impact, and cause less collateral damage—and the organization's performance benefits.
- **Octocracy®** — an approach to governance: the distribution of decision rights and responsibility in organizations that wish to function neither in a purely hierarchical way nor without structure.

- **Cofluencer®** — a stance: the ability to produce an effect together rather than to exert influence.
- **SALTER®** — a diagnostic framework: six fractures, six levers.
- **Equiconscism®** — the theory of conscious balance that links it all together, offered as a common good.

Contact

LP3 AG / SA · Eidochsweg 23 / Chemin du Lézard 23 · 2504 Biel/Bienne · Switzerland
david.fiorucci@lp3leadership.com · +41 78 818 40 18 www.lp3leadership.com · www.salter.ch · www.octocracy.swiss · www.davidfiorucci.com · www.equiconscism.org (under construction)

My Reflections, My Commitments, My Actions



EQUICONSCISM®

Conscious balance: the art of thriving together, in motion and with measure.

Never has humanity possessed so much wealth, knowledge, and technology; never has it felt so fragile. Neither blind growth nor punitive degrowth can guide our choices any longer.

Equiconscism proposes another way: an economic and societal theory of conscious balance, conceived as a dynamic, continuous, and differentiated process through which people, organizations, and societies constantly adjust their decisions so that the economy, society, and the living world support one another.

Grounded in philosophy, the life sciences, history, and the world's great wisdom traditions, this white paper offers practical tools—ten key questions, scorecards, a five-movement cycle, ten commandments for artificial intelligence—from the individual to the state, from the small business to the multinational, from the family to the municipality. Complementary to Ravi Chaudhry's *Peopleism* and in dialogue with the encyclical *Magnifica Humanitas*, it is offered to humanity under an open license.

© 2026 David Fiorucci — LP3 AG / SA · Text licensed under CC BY-NC-SA 4.0
Equiconscism®, SALTER®, LP3®, Octocracy®, and Cofluencer® are registered trademarks
ISBN 978-3-9526757-4-8 · LP3 AG / SA · Chemin du Lézard 23 · 2504 Biel/Bienne · Switzerland
www.lp3leadership.com · www.equiconscism.org

ISBN 978-3-9526757-4-8
9 783952 675748 >