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The Compassionate Revolution

Reading about the future in the newspapers and in many novels and movies, you might think all the choices for the Twenty-First Century are disastrous. Nuclear Armageddon? The more traditional religious Armageddon ending up with the earth destroyed and the believers going elsewhere? A “Brave New World” where virtual interactions between people are more common than real ones? Increasing concentration of wealth in the hands of a few? I say no, thank you, to all these alternatives. Happily, I believe that a better choice exists.

Some common images of the future in the media involve increasing mechanization of daily life, wide use of virtual reality, and further detachment from the natural world. In some science fiction stories, the Earth’s ecological system has become uninhabitable and humankind must move to an artificial environment, here or on another planet. Less dramatically, a lot of people fear the increasing power of multinational corporations building a global economy, leading to a world where a few rich people run the lives of the increasingly poor and insecure masses.¹ This would be a world where diversity and distinctiveness are lost, any part of the world is just like any other, and every society functions mainly as a “market” for the multinationals’ goods. People in such a society would be moved around purely for the convenience of the market. Community, family, and friendship as we know them would therefore be lost, or at least much weakened. With the rise of biotechnology and genetic engineering, even our body parts would become commodities to be sold for a few people’s enrichment.²

Fundamentalist religious groups provide a different version of disaster, though they don’t see it that way. In their view, Earth is irredeemable and will ultimately perish in its own sin. The righteous will go elsewhere and live with God, in a place that is not of their own making but is simply “prepared” for them. So many fundamentalists also believe, underneath their rhetoric of spiritual hopefulness, that human efforts to create a better society are doomed.

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But both these images of the future, global corporate domination and Armageddon, assume that the common nonsense of currently prevalent beliefs and attitudes logic will continue. They assume the logic of a dominator society. There is a third alternative future, based on a partnership society and common sense, that is much more pleasant. It is close to the ancient longings of major religions, but would take place on the earth among mortal humans. It isn't inevitable, but can happen if we *believe it to be possible* and work at it with humor as well as diligence.

We might even get a better future *after* a period of world domination by a corporate global competitive economy. After all, the technological changes of the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century Industrial Revolution at first mainly benefitted a small number of rising capitalists. But after about a hundred years — and a lot of violent struggles — industrialization finally led to a marked improvement in average Western people's living standards. Similarly, the current revolution based on information technology in the short run is benefitting mainly the rich and newly rich, but could end up benefitting everyone in the long run — *if we help that process along*. We should approach the possibility of a brighter future with an ironic attitude attributed to Isaac Bashevis Singer: "We must believe in free will. We have no choice."

Some readers will say that my faith in a better future is wishful thinking. Many neuroscientists believe that evolutionary pressures have created human traits that make a genuinely cooperative society (as in recent utopias like *Ecotopia* and *Woman on the Edge of Time*³) impossible. As Antonio Damasio said, "It is difficult to imagine that individuals and societies governed by the seeking of pleasure, as much as or more than by the avoidance of pain, can survive at all."⁴ My own belief, in contrast, is that the pain-avoiding (in Abraham Maslow's terms,⁵ safety-seeking) outlook is only one of many attracting states that individuals or societies can approach. It has been the dominant attractor of society's dynamical system in most of the world of the last several thousand years. But in the present time of global change, we have it in our power to shift direction toward an attractor in which cooperation replaces domination, and delight is the major organizing principle.⁶

Moreover, wishful thinking can sometimes serve as self-fulfilling prophecy by getting us to stretch our imaginations. Anyway, I believe wishful thinking is less harmful than its opposite, which might be called

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thoughtful wishing. That is a term I coined for making a virtue out of necessity and limiting one's imagination to scenarios that have already been rationally demonstrated to be possible.

Extrapolation from the past and present to the future is a dangerous exercise, since the world dynamical system is extremely nonlinear, unpredictable, and often chaotic. But if technocrats, cynics, and fundamentalists are allowed to extrapolate, so can idealists, utopians, and revolutionaries. One of the more imaginative and hopeful scenarios of the near future was developed by the population ecologist John Calhoun.

Calhoun's Historical Schema

The starting point of Calhoun's speculations was his results (published in 1962) on the behavioral effects of population density in rats and mice,⁷ which he later generalized to conclusions about humans. He built a system of four pens for Norway rats of which two "outer" pens bordered on walls, whereas two "inner" pens were accessible both from the outer ones and from each other. This space arrangement caused the two inner pens to become much more crowded than the other two. Since all the rats had more than enough food, Calhoun could observe the disruptive effects of crowding on behavior apart from its effects on the food supply. In fact, he observed that the inner pens became desirable as gathering places because of their high social activity. For this reason, rats from the outer pens gradually collected at the food hoppers in the inner pens even though food was available in the outer pens as well. (Compare this to people drawn to the excitement of crowded cities.)

Calhoun found that crowding was particularly bad for female rats bearing young. Female rats normally build nests out of paper strips around the time their young are born, but those in the inner pens became much less systematic in their nest building. They wouldn't form the paper strips into their normal cup shape, being distracted by a variety of other social events. Other aspects of care and feeding of infants were similarly disrupted. The decline in infant care was severe enough that in one set of experiments 80 percent of infants in these pens died before weaning.

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The male rats in the crowded pens also behaved in abnormal ways. While normal male rats establish clear dominance hierarchies, the males in these inner pens constantly struggled for power, with no one rat occupying the top slot permanently. Also, there were two types of males that stayed out of the dominance struggle entirely. One type was completely passive and ignored other rats of both sexes. The other type was hyperactive and hypersexual, often pursuing females into their burrows which isn't part of normal rat courtship.

So far this doesn't sound like an observation that would lead to optimism! But please suspend disbelief and wait to see how his theory developed.

Why should crowding itself cause behavioral problems, even when food is more than adequate? In several other articles, Calhoun developed a mathematical theory to account for this fact. The general idea is that the number of possible interactions between animals (or people) is proportional to the number of pairs of animals, which is the *square* of the total number of animals. But the number of interactions that can be satisfying, in that one animal gives another what it wants, is proportional to the total number of animals. So if all interactions are possible, the fraction that are satisfying decreases as the number of animals increases. In other words, an animal wanting anything from another animal — sex, friendship, mutual grooming, or whatever — has more animals to compete with for attention as the number goes up. Also, the cognitive processing needed to determine who is available to do what with whom becomes more difficult as there are more animals.

Calhoun stated that humans also experience more potential frustration as their numbers increase. Our more complex brains, however, enable us to develop strategies to cope with the frustrations coming from rising population. He proposed that we have dealt with increasing world population throughout history by changing the rules governing what types of interactions were allowed or encouraged. As Calhoun stated:

A critical kind of concept involved production of new categories of social roles which reduced meaningful contacts with others to the level appropriate to that which earlier transpired in the small

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closed groups. Each increase in density and social roles increased the amount and diversity of information flowing over the contact network. This increased the probability of new ideas emerging, some of which increased the efficiency of resource acquisition, which in turn permitted more people to survive, and more social roles to develop.⁸

He went on to speculate that such development of new rules has made faster population increases possible. It has allowed the world's population, since about 40,000 B.C., to double at successively shorter intervals (in fact, each doubling interval has been shown to be about half the previous one).

Calhoun then looked at the history of major revolutions in human thought. He found that each revolution could be interpreted as emerging at a certain (approximate) date, and that such dates corresponded to critical times for the rise in the world's population. Specifically, world population at the date where he placed a revolution in thought was about four times its population at the date of the previous revolution. These revolutions and approximate dates⁹ (see Figure 12.1) are:

Sapient (38710 B.C.) — ushering in our humanity

Agricultural (8157 B.C.) — creating mythology and social form around food production

Religious (519 B.C.) — helping to establish fixed codes of behavior

Artistic (1391 A.D.) — developing holistic attitudes and philosophy

Scientific (1868 A.D.) — emphasizing rational understanding of the world

Communication (1988 A.D.) — emphasizing creativity and broad experience

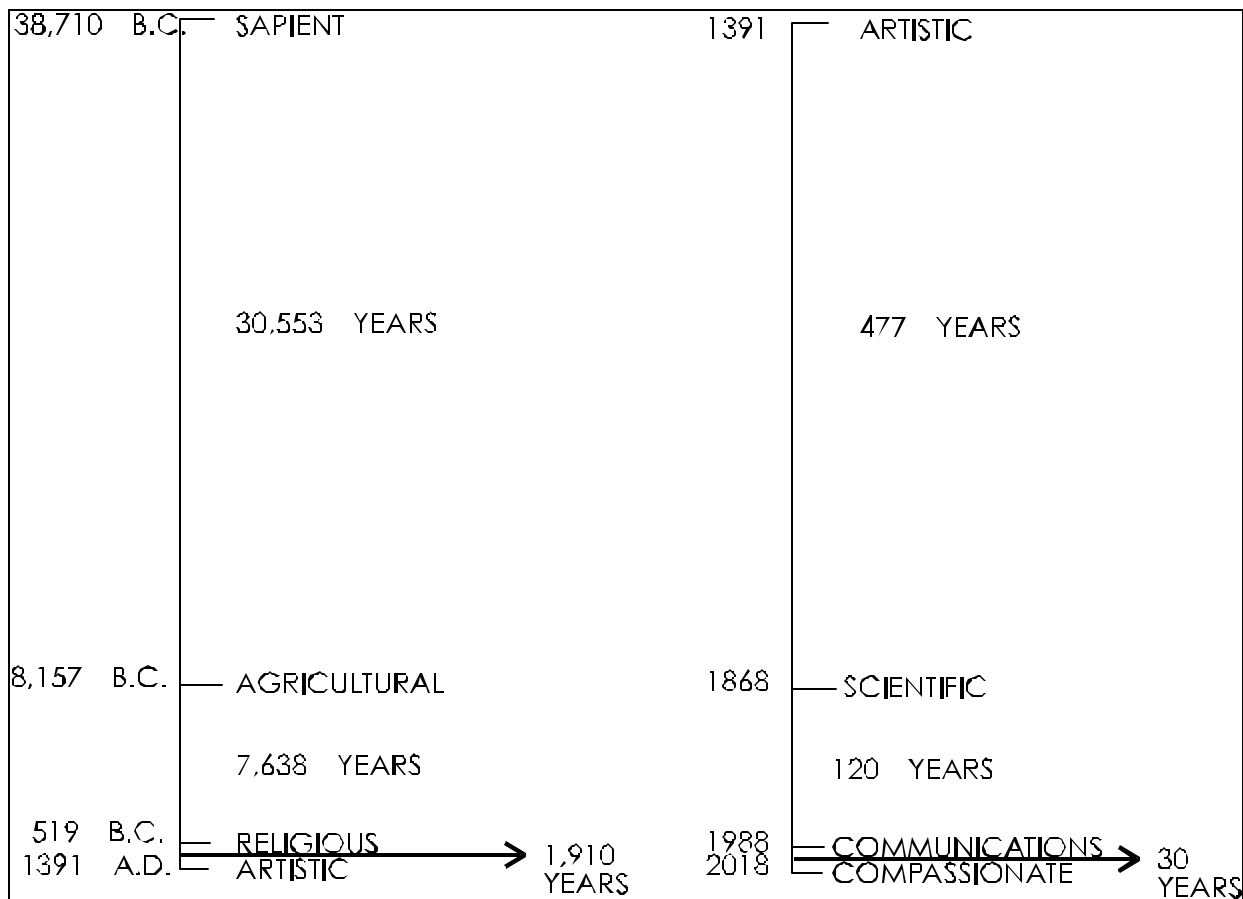
POSSIBLE FUTURE:

Compassionate (2018 A.D.?)^{*} — emphasizing diversity and mutual interdependence

^{*} The author of this book will then be in his early seventies.

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Calhoun believes the Compassionate Revolution, if it happens, will be an offshoot of world-wide communications. He shares the vision of other technological futurists such as Alvin Toffler¹⁰ that world-wide electronic networks, rather than making everyone alike, will make it easier to people to communicate and respect each other as individuals. The interdependence will lead, in his view, to strategies that will end the rise in world population. The increase in number of people will be replaced by what he calls *information prostheses*: electronic devices that are connected to all of us to increase our information processing capacity. I don't have a strong opinion on the necessity of such machines, but in general envision that technological changes would need to be motivated by the same compassionate (or partnership, or common sense) concerns as are any other changes in society.



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Figure 12.1. Calhoun's scheme for revolutions in human history. The time interval between peaks of successive revolutions is about one fourth the previous interval. The time scale of modern revolutions on the right is about 64 times as fast as time scale of ancient revolutions on the left.

The details of Calhoun's quantitative formulation are based on many speculative leaps about events I haven't studied in detail. The chaotic nature of social forces make a numerical scheme like his look a little too "neat" to me. Besides, the global population problem is a widely controversial subject. Different disciplines, such as economists and biologists, tend to disagree about the seriousness of the population explosion and the numbers involved.¹¹ But I agree with Calhoun's basic idea that population increases produce stresses, and that much of human intellectual history can be explained as devising strategies to cope with those stresses.

Moreover, Calhoun makes the important point that we can no longer rely on natural selection to direct the further evolution of our species.¹² We need instead to actively direct our future evolution, socially and not just physically. The goal of our directed evolution should be to make every human being actively concerned about every other human being and the rest of the planet. Crucial to such directed evolution will be our knowledge of the brain and its neural networks. That knowledge of the brain will enhance our capacity to distinguish common sense from common nonsense when it comes to human psychology.

The rest of this chapter will embellish Calhoun's vision and outline the forms I see the Compassionate Revolution taking. Since this book is mainly about human psychology, the discussion won't emphasize the technological advances — many of them based on *artificial* neural networks — that are likely to occur. Instead, it will emphasize the changes in social, aesthetic, religious, and lifestyle (in general, attitude) conventions that will accompany these advances. Technology without good social policies for its use can do a lot of harm. In a plenary lecture given at the 1994 World Congress on Neural Networks, John Taylor raised the specter of a future where artificial networks will make it possible to buy a conscious machine for \$20, and a conscious machine with emotions for \$100. Another plenary speaker, Paul Werbos, added that in order to ensure that such machines are beneficial to society, we need much more knowledge of *human* neural networks!

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Now, building on the view of human psychology and attitudes developed in the rest of this book, let our imaginations roam. Let's try to build a future where both government policies and social customs follow common sense as much as possible, and eschew common nonsense. The types of social organization which I relate to the Compassionate Revolution have been given other names by other futurists. Riane Eisler calls them *gylanic*, a word she coined from combining the two Greek words for "woman" and "man," in order to refer to the condition of equal partnership between the sexes.¹³ Eisler also talks about creating a *partnership society* as opposed to a *dominator society*,¹⁴ terms that are easy to understand and have achieved fairly wide usage. Ralph Abraham calls these compassionate social patterns *Orphic*, after the earliest roots of the Orphic religious traditions based on love and ecstasy.¹⁵ Marilyn Ferguson has called the people working to bring about these changes, scattered all over the planet and in all walks of life, the *Aquarian conspiracy*, after the sign of the Zodiac sometimes associated with love and peace.¹⁶

In Eisler's terms, the compassionate restructuring of our institutions means restructuring every human activity to fit a partnership rather than a dominator orientation. In fact, Eisler has explained much of what I call common nonsense as having roots in dominator ideologies and customs. Broadly speaking, to restructure our society along partnership lines, we need to act as if we have a fair degree of trust in people's ultimate intentions. We need, that is, not to treat people as if they *want* to act in stupid or inconsiderate or growth-denying ways.

A partnership orientation would be psychologically a sharp turn away from the security-oriented 1990s, with their gated communities, metal detectors, and the like. But for a high level of mutual trust to be effective, we need to change not only our social structures but also our fundamental attitudes and habits. For instance, we need to get away from the current Western emphasis on definite and complete solutions, which was lamented by John Saul¹⁷ (see Chapters 6 and 8). Instead, we need to continually give each other "partial credit" for incomplete but well-directed actions. The way we treat others needs to, as much as is reasonable, answer the plea by the neural network theorist Warren McCulloch: "Don't bite my finger, look where I am pointing."¹⁸ We also need to get into the habit of seeing large problems, whether social

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or personal, with a “systems viewpoint” that recognizes multiple aspects of the problem and how they interrelate.

Much of this book has focused on the partnership approach to science, as well as suggesting how findings from brain science may support a partnership orientation to society in general. The book has also explored partnership approaches to politics, psychotherapy, and work place organization. Riane Eisler’s book, *Sacred Pleasure*,¹⁹ focuses on the partnership approach to sex, family, interpersonal (especially male-female) relationships, and religion. All these changes toward partnership orientation in different spheres are interrelated, and progress in any one is likely to encourage all the others. (That is the reverse of what happens with a short-term mentality, where shallowness in one pursuit encourages shallowness in other pursuits!²⁰)

Ultimately, I believe, compassionate solutions not only are the most desirable but are the most *efficient* and the ones that work the *best*! This is because of the way our brains are constructed and the needs they have, including self-actualization. Because we have needs for love, esteem, actualization, and spiritual value, we rebel against forms of social organization, even forms that seem “rationally” to work, if they thwart those needs. As the Talmud said, “Kindness is the highest form of wisdom.”

This chapter builds further on the vision of compassionate, partnership approaches to many aspects of life. As it roams through different areas of life, it starts with serious concerns about survival, but moves toward promoting a sense of delight. The two may seem like opposites but are quite compatible. In fact, the types of social organization that will help us ensure our *long-term* survival as a species, and the survival of other life on our planet, will probably also turn out to make us enjoy life more.

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Population, Environment, and the World Food Supply

The central role of population in Calhoun's historical schema suggests that limiting population growth would be an essential part of the Compassionate Revolution. Limiting population is closely tied to respect for the environment and the diversity of species. Such concern for population and environmental issues has been slow to arise. In the urge to develop industry as quickly as possible, we have created bigger and more crowded cities. More recently, the crowding has spread to the suburbs around the cities. The growth of cities and suburbs has of course diminished wilderness habitats for practically all non-human species — except for a few exceptionally adaptable ones like cockroaches. But the policies that motivated urban, suburban, and industrial sprawl have been local and short-term in their concerns. One of the first faint stirrings of the Compassionate Revolution has been the growth of global and long-term concerns. Some results have been Earth Summits, studies of world population trends by the Club of Rome and other groups, and the environmental movement as a whole.

Concern for the environment includes a wide range of significant problems, and this book won't go into all of them. One aspect involves the energy and resource use habits of people, both individual citizens and businesses, in developed nations. People's everyday lives need to be changed from a focus on maximum consumption to a focus on sustainability. Since this book is mainly about human attitudes, we need to ask what attitudes will encourage environmentally sound practices. Many writers have recognized that protection of the environment necessitates major changes in our typical attitudes and social customs — the same kinds of changes advocated throughout this book. We can hope that the current set of environmental crises — holes in the ozone layer, global warming through greenhouse gases, and depletion of parts of our food supply (such as fish in many parts of the world) — will frighten people enough to jolt us into the attitude changes we need in all of life. The environmental crisis would then play, for society as a whole, the role of a “negative affect” signal (see the neural network of Figure 7.2). It would push humanity out of a comfortable, but nonoptimal, attractor and toward a more satisfying attractor.

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A special issue of an interdisciplinary journal, the *Journal of Social Issues*,²¹ was devoted to the psychological changes needed to promote environmentally beneficial decisions. The biologist Mary Clark in that issue identified three basic attitudes in particular that need to be changed about the dominant Euro-American world view. These are the belief in the dark side of human nature; the belief in the inevitable scarcity of resources; and the belief in cumulative progress over time, which tends to disparage the accomplishment of earlier and “primitive” societies. Clark suggested replacing these by their opposites: a belief in the “bright side” of human nature, in abundance of resources, and in adaptation to changing circumstances. By means of self-fulfilling prophecy, these attitude changes would be likely to promote environmentally sound practices on the part of citizens (and, ultimately, governments and corporations). Other authors in the special issue noted still more psychological roots of anti-environmental attitudes. These include the Western cultural obsession with individual freedom, including the freedom to amass as much private property as possible and not worry about other life forms it impinges on; our fascination with technology for its own sake; and our belief in unlimited economic growth.

The attitudes that Clark suggests turn us away from gadget worship, the common nonsense that more advanced technology is always better. If an object is good and useful in some situations, this promotes a kind of idolatry toward that object. As a result, many of us use cars, air conditioners, elevators, or computers at times when we could do what we want to do better without them, or when not using them would be better for our own bodies. But we also need to get away from the “gated dipole” (see Chapter 5) opposite, the equally false idea that low technology is always better than high. The “small is beautiful” apostle E. M. Schumacher²² has been misinterpreted as believing this. Schumacher once told friends that if he had lived in a world where small organizations dominated, he would have written a book called *Big is Beautiful*.²³

Another danger to the world environment comes from the developing nations. Poorer countries in Africa, Asia, and Latin America often try to imitate American and European patterns of development. These countries badly need to improve their economies for the welfare of their people. But the only model they have for development is the high-growth, high-crowding, high-pollution model that already built up the

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Western economies. If the entire world were to consume resources at the rate the West currently does, our food and water would be depleted rapidly.

Is there another way to develop poor areas of the world, a way that is more in keeping with the attitudes of adaptation and harmony with nature that Mary Clark proposes? Does the system describing these countries have an “alternative attractor,” in the dynamical system language of this book? As Alvin Toffler asked: “Is classical industrialization the only path to progress? And does it make any sense to imitate the industrial model at a time when industrial civilization itself is caught in its terminal agonies?”²⁴ If there is a viable, “greener” path, what international policies will encourage Third World countries to follow it?

Some people advocate an extreme version of the “small is beautiful” philosophy²⁵ for Third World development. This outlook emphasizes small local labor-intensive industries that can keep people employed in villages and rural areas so they don’t have to move to already polluted and overcrowded cities. This strategy has many advantages both for ecology and for community building. But it also has disadvantages: it would continue to keep these nations economically dependent on the more industrialized countries of Europe, North America, and East Asia. Development based solely on rural handicrafts may prevent starvation but doesn’t lead to permanent economic improvement, as was found in Maoist China. In the spirit of synthesizing paradoxical ideas, it is desirable to find a way of developing the Third World that synthesizes the best of industrialization and the best of traditional rural life.

The best idea I have seen for such a synthesis is the “Third Wave” strategy discussed by Toffler.²⁶ Toffler argues that some of the types of changes that are beginning to occur *in the West* provide the best hope for economic development if spread to the poorer countries. In particular, industries like microelectronics and computer software lend themselves to decentralized production, even as they advance technological capability. An increasing number of people in advanced countries, in fact, carry on computer-related businesses from their homes. Thus if Third World development is based on industries of this sort, it may lead to economic improvement without massive disruption of families and communities, or dangerous air and water pollution, or depletion of soil and other resources.

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This should be coupled with grass-roots efforts to organize labor in these countries. There have been some tentative efforts, for example, by the International Labor Organization to ensure Third World workers — including those that work out of their homes — the right to organize into unions that can negotiate with their employers, many of them large global corporations.²⁷ The protests at the 1999 Seattle meeting of the World Trade Organization were mainly about labor and environmental issues. This trend needs to be accelerated.

My view is in agreement with Schumacher's actual belief that what is needed is *appropriate* technology, of the complexity and size suitable for each situation. In order for this to happen, it will be necessary to provide incentives for public-spirited use of innovative technologies. It will also be necessary to oppose economic interests that choose the size of their technology for reasons of profit alone (such as huge power plants).

Achieving an economic order that will be good for the currently poor countries will involve constant negotiation and mediation. International organizations should continue to grow, with a recognition of interdependence and equal partnership between cultures.* The growth of electronic communication systems (the Internet and World Wide Web), and the movement now arising to make the Internet accessible to average people all over the world, will enhance this kind of equality. The Internet is likely also to enhance the overall mutual concern that is a major part of the Compassionate Revolution.

Among many people in poorer countries, there's an understandable desire to emulate the material goods and consumption of the West, the junk goods as well as the useful ones. The environmentally sound strategy for Third World development prohibits yielding to this desire completely. The negotiation process, however, allows for talking to people who have such desires and trying to compromise with them. This may sometimes mean providing material goods and sometimes trying to design psychic incentives to substitute for them. Negotiation (with the help of the Internet) will work much more slowly than Mao-style

* I say "cultures" rather than "nations" because with the growth of international institutions, nations may not continue to exist in their present form.

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Draconian government decrees. In the long run, however, more people will cooperate with negotiated settlements than with government commands.

If there is to be economic growth in the Third World without environmental catastrophe, population control is essential. Again, the less coercively this is done the better. But coercion probably can't be entirely avoided because of the large number of people involved and the urgency of the population problem. Population control has been resisted for economic and health reasons, because each family needed children to work on their lands and, until recently, many of the children didn't survive into adulthood. Centuries ago, the need for more people inspired the formation of patriarchal social and religious structures that tended to encourage large birth rates. But as health has improved and more people have left the land, many of these traditional social structures have remained. This is an example of a maladaptive social structure staying alive by positive feedback from its consequences, as in the MART neural network (Figure 4.2), and outliving its usefulness.

Thus, effective population control depends on changing patriarchal structures that encourage overpopulation. This means empowering Third World women in their own homes and work places — an issue much discussed at international women's conferences. For this reason and many others, equality of the sexes, both in currently rich and currently poor countries, is a cornerstone of the Compassionate Revolution. Gender equality, if it is to work, will have consequences that are revolutionary for all our institutions. We are only beginning to see its implications, in population, life styles, politics, and other areas.

A New Equality of the Sexes

The women's movement has been one of the leading forces for social change. The fact that women are a majority of people has kept the movement strong when other progressive forces were weakening. Its effects go far beyond getting more women into positions of political and economic power. It has been widely recognized that the women's movement is changing the nature of power itself. The patriarchal, ultra-rationalist structures and customs that have developed in many walks of life²⁸ aren't friendly to feminist

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insights, and will be changed by them. Currently, the patriarchal institutions are in a death struggle and trying to coopt the feminist movement by simply integrating women into existing structures. But this only postpones the inevitable cultural clash in which common sense, if not time, is on the side of the feminists.

Unequal, hierarchical relationships are based on common nonsense (even if they are partly rooted in our animal ancestry as well as past social customs). Being “on top” is ultimately unsatisfying, just as is being “on the bottom.” In the case of women and men, the women’s movement in the West has led to a men’s movement. Some of this has been a reaction *against* feminism, an attempt to recapture essential or “wild” masculinity.²⁹ That is the part of the men’s movement most discussed in the media, with the poet Robert Bly of “Iron John” fame as its main spokesman. But a larger and older part of the men’s movement works *in support of* feminism, as discussed by authors like Marvin Allen, Marc Feigen Fasteau, Mark Gerzon, and John Stoltenberg.³⁰ It is made up of men who recognize that changing gender roles can benefit men in many ways. A role change for men means more latitude to express emotions; more freedom to enjoy activities that don’t lead to an income; closer relationships with families and friends; and relief from some stresses that lead to high rates of suicide, alcoholism, and heart disease.

A book by the educational consultant Elinor Lenz and the anthropologist Barbara Myerhoff described the recent infusion of traditionally female values such as connectedness and affiliation into American public and private lives.³¹ (While their examples are mainly from the United States, parallel changes are occurring in other affluent countries as well.) In business, for example, more and more men as well as women now view the old modes of hard-headed analytic problem solving as common nonsense. Ways of working that used to be considered rational and practical are now unmasked as being highly emotional and subjective. More precisely, such ways are rooted in patriarchal male roles rather than being effective responses to situations.

For example, Lenz and Myerhoff note that traditional male styles include a lot of secrecy. Each man is preoccupied with hiding his emotional vulnerability and protecting his turf. This style is badly suited to an economy where global communication is important and information needs to be as accurate as possible (as attested by Chris Argyris’ studies of management style³²). As Lenz and Myerhoff said:

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“Masculine power talk is often concealing rather than revealing. The process of developing a facade of superior strength and control results in a style of speech that, along with its sexism, is guarded and flattened out, so that it tends to frustrate rather than promote communication.”³³ The style of openness and personal concern that is traditionally female — though many women lack that style and many men possess it — is more suited to the information economy.³⁴

Lenz and Myerhoff discussed the rise of women’s occupational and political networks. Unlike typical “old boy” networks from the times when professions were nearly all male, these women’s networks often provide their members support on a personal and emotional level as well as on the level of practical career goals. Gradually, many men of my age and younger are acquiring “female” patterns and becoming involved in the same type of network. It is somewhat prophetic that Lenz and Myerhoff wrote before the current rise of world-wide electronic mail, which has also encouraged a more open communication style. Both the feminist-oriented networks and the Internet have the same kind of diffuse, nonlinear, often chaotic structure.*

As Lenz and Myerhoff emphasized, the “feminization of America” they described works in fits and starts. The old patriarchal system is still powerful and resists these changes. The authors noted that women in managerial and political position are in danger of being coopted, that is, becoming just “good old boys” with female faces. As more women have achieved such positions, more have succumbed to the system. Since these authors wrote, in fact, many work places (including, in the 1994 elections, the United States Congress!) have moved in anti-feminist directions. “Downsizing” has led to greater job insecurity, more competitiveness and protectiveness, longer work hours (and therefore hours away from family and friends) for *both* male and female employees. So the shape of the future is still up for grabs. But the more knowledge we have of our brains (and therefore of what types of environments fit with our natures) and the less we get cynical about lasting change, the more likely it is that feminist solutions will be adopted.

* Neural networks tend to have this type of structure as well!

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Clashes between traditional and forward-looking ways of doing things are apparent, for example, in my own profession. The interdisciplinary field of neural networks cuts across many traditional categories: it has to engage computer scientists, engineers, mathematicians, biologists, psychologists, physicists, philosophers, and social scientists, among other groups of scholars, along with researchers from industry and government. This cross-fertilization has led to intellectual peak experiences at many neural network conferences. Our conferences (particularly those with 100 or fewer people attending) at times have an atmosphere similar to the idealized discussions of ancient Greek philosophers. Distinctions of discipline, rank (full professor versus assistant professor versus student) and walk of life (academic versus industry versus government) are irrelevant. All these people together enjoy the free flow of ideas and high-level talk — often punctuated with good food, beer, and sightseeing. But outside such gatherings, the day-to-day life of neural network researchers isn't always idyllic. Macho turf defending, competition for scarce government grants, and putdowns of rival researchers occur in my field as in other fields of science.

As the neural network pioneer Stephen Grossberg said, the very nature of neural network researchers' pursuit (study of the human mind) *should* discourage such practices and encourage cooperation.³⁵ But turf battles persist because the field is still enmeshed in the traditional dominator version of the academic, business, and political systems and their social customs.

In scholarship, in the arts and crafts, and in creative aspects of every kind of job, one effect of increasing female influence will be that group effort and cooperation become more valued. If the Compassionate Revolution occurs, the intellectual or artistic superstar, such as Einstein, Darwin, or Picasso, may become a thing of the past. Many people find such an idea frightening. They fear that without the Great Man (I use the sexist term because the concept is closely tied to patriarchy), we will sink into homogeneous mediocrity.³⁶ I don't share that fear. There will still be men and women who are unusually good in particular areas of work. The very talented will continue to produce great works in a more cooperative and less ego-driven setting, and the moderately talented will also be able to make their less spectacular contributions. A similar vision of future society was expressed by the neural network researcher Robert Hecht-Nielsen,³⁷ who coined for it the term *ubility*, meaning “universal nobility.” The

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creative effort of artists and intellectuals will be interwoven with the practical business of society (see Marge Piercy's *Woman on the Edge of Time*³⁸ for a fictional account of this), rather than standing apart from business as it often does now. This will relieve aspiring creators from the emotional stresses of what the men's movement activist Marc Feigen Fasteau called the "head-and-shoulders-above-the-worthless-gregarious-dependent-masses guilt trip."³⁹

I was part of a delightful, if humble, example of group creativity when active in the Society for Creative Anachronism, the organization that simulates Medieval and Renaissance life. At one party attended by Society members, two of my friends mentioned that earlier in the day they had been listening to a record of Elizabethan English music while cooking spaghetti. Their recording included a song about the ways in which tobacco is like love. While listening they had realized "spaghetti" has the same meter as "tobacco"! Hearing this, several of us at the party who were familiar with the song set to its tune new words about the ways in which *spaghetti* is like love ("Love doth entangle all the limbs, so doth spaghetti," et cetera^{*}).

The spaghetti song is the type of harmless fun in which more people will have both the time and the inclination to engage if society becomes more cooperative. And this kind of creative spirit doesn't have to be restricted to a few people with college degrees or esoteric interests. In well-run farms, manufacturing plants, even houses, people make a joyful ritual out of doing required tasks, putting their heads and their hearts together into performing well and creatively.

Marilyn French set forth a similar vision of a feminist-inspired society to replace patriarchy.⁴⁰ Like Riane Eisler,⁴¹ French said that *pleasure* needs to be a central goal of a future cooperative society: "if we want to create a world that *can* live together without utter uniformity and totalitarianism, we must gear ourselves to cooperate, must teach our young the pleasures of working/playing together, and thinking about nature and the planet in a cooperative spirit."⁴² She went on to say that the traditional focus on control, on

^{*} Copies of the words and music of the "Spaghetti" song are available from the author on request at levine@uta.edu

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order above everything else, needs to be replaced by a new emphasis: “The question that should provide our standard as we make the choices that will lead us to a new vision is what kinds of human behavior bring us delight.”⁴³ The neural networks in our brains don’t drive us only toward survival. They drive us toward wanting life at its best, including self-actualization, synergy, pleasure, and spiritual experience. As French says, pleasure isn’t a commodity; it’s more about quality than about quantity, and it is hindered by the current Western emphasis on the quantifiable and measurable. Even economic decisions we prefer to make on subjective and not strictly quantitative terms.

French preceded her vision of the future with a passionate denunciation of several thousand years of patriarchy. She saw the suppression of women as closely tied to the worst of our common nonsense, such as valuing duty over pleasure.⁴⁴ A similar theme is stated in religious language by many feminist theologians. Barbara Groth, for example, argued that our epidemic of violence (particularly male violence against women) is rooted in the religiously sanctioned system of restrictions, obligations, and taboos we have developed under patriarchy.⁴⁵ She discussed how maintaining a system of male control requires a belief that sexual pleasure is sinful, or at best a necessary evil. In this system, following one’s own inclinations instead of obeying a masculine God is the worst sin of all. Groth forcefully refuted the common nonsense (which is becoming more popular as society becomes more unstable) that social breakdown can be stopped by going back to more hierarchical, authoritarian religions and social structures. Instead, she shows, these hierarchical structures *promote* violence. Only by moving toward a partnership society, Groth added, can we achieve lasting social peace.

The ultimate answer to our current social instability, to the breakdown of community ties, isn’t turning the clock back to the “patriarchal” equilibrium from which society has been recently dislocated (see Figure 10.3). Instead it’s taking the risks involved in moving toward a future, yet unseen “gender equality” equilibrium (see the bottom of that figure). And risk is essential to getting there at all. Another feminist theologian, Sharon Welch, criticized the tendency in Western society to avoid possible actions that look like they won’t lead to definite success.⁴⁶ Actions that change society for the better, in peace, race relations, the environment or anything else, are seldom safe and often have the strong possibility of failing.

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Welch proposed an “ethic of risk” that obligates us to make these difficult choices and can sustain us through the period of apprehensive uncertainty after a difficult choice has been made.

The pleasure outlook that French proposed is often confused with lack of morality, that is, with the notion that “anything goes.” This “anything goes” label is often pinned unfairly on groups of people who experiment with changing rules, whether in real life (such as neo-Pagans⁴⁷) or in fictional utopias (such as Ecotopians⁴⁸). The Ecotopians, for example, enjoy daily life, move freely between work and play, and are sexually liberated, but are not amoral and have definite values as a society. In particular, they believe strongly in compassion toward others, community, and respect for the environment. They have fewer legal restrictions than present-day Americans in some areas (sex and the family) but more restrictions in other areas (economic growth and pollution).

The Compassionate Revolution doesn’t mean fewer responsibilities. It just means that our responsibilities would be driven more by human needs and less by formal rules. The educational psychologist Carol Gilligan said, and I agree, that this stance toward obligation is closer to traditional female than to male norms.⁴⁹ Gilligan did not discuss whether the roots for that sex difference are social or inborn; I believe they are mainly social. The dominator society’s ethic has suppressed concern for human needs in males but allowed it to survive in females. But the neural networks in all our brains, female and male alike, are ultimately happier with obligations that are more fluid and human-centered.

Obligation Without Coercion

Responsibility these days is often felt as negative and tied to some sort of hierarchy. We say: I must do this or else so and so will be terribly angry at me. Or else we think of responsibility as tit for tat: I must do this or else so and so won’t give me something I want. This is particularly true in work settings, when “so and so” is a boss. But we sometimes translate that mentality to family settings, seeing parents, spouses, or children as if they were angry vengeful powers. Also, many of our religious traditions put God in that

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role (the theologian Barbara Groth calls it “God as abusive parent”⁵⁰). Deeply ingrained in many cultures is the feeling (a rather paradoxical one) that we must act ethically or God will punish us.

As more Westerners have questioned traditional religious values, we’ve become more reluctant to submit to any punishing, vengeful powers. Our reluctance is supported by psychological experiments showing that punishment is often not the most effective method of changing behavior. This is because punishment has the side effect of suppressing behavior in general, including some behaviors usually regarded as desirable.⁵¹ More effective means of modifying behavior have been discovered that rely more on reward, praise, and encouragement.⁵² Such methods will need to be used at times, particularly on children, even in a utopian society. But in many of our activities, we need to strive to go further and replace what psychologists call *extrinsic motivation* (doing something because of what you will get for it, like money or fame) by *intrinsic motivation* (doing something because of the pleasure or other benefits you expect from the act itself)⁵³.

Intrinsic motivation tends to be closely related to democratic structures. Extrinsic motivation (especially by punishment) tends to be related to authoritarian structures, including some traditional religious ones. For the last two hundred years, the West has suffered from cognitive dissonance between centuries-old authoritarian religion and emerging democratic politics. In fact, Thomas Jefferson and many of the other Founding Fathers of American democracy were religious liberals — such as deists or unitarians — and many of the traditional clergy in colonial America fiercely opposed their political innovations.

But the Founding Fathers’ revolution was incomplete. Aside from excluding women, people of color, and non-owners of property, they didn’t extend their notions of democracy to economics and the work place. Gradually, the lack of economic democracy in the United States (which is worse now than in Europe⁵⁴) has sapped the strength of American political institutions, in part because many people are too exhausted from their jobs and family responsibilities to participate in volunteer politics. Decline in participation is one cause of current apathy and cynicism.

The Compassionate Revolution would need to push earlier, more restricted revolutions, such as the American and French, much further forward, both in institutions and social customs. The growth of

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employee-owned companies, while modest in the face of expanding multinational corporations, has been significant, and represents a trend in that direction.⁵⁵ Once people experience a synergistic setting where they feel like part of the decision making process, they are often intrinsically motivated to work even in the absence of commands from a boss. They work not to placate other people, but for their own welfare and other people's welfare that they care about. People work without being forced to if they feel a positive stake in the results of their work, or if they enjoy the work itself.

The nature of work would inevitably change a lot. With the decline of manufacturing and the rise of information technology, work hours are likely to be shortened (perhaps cut in half) because there won't be enough 40-hour-a-week jobs to go around.⁵⁶ Currently, we are seeing those people who are still employed working longer hours and feeling under more pressure because they see others losing their jobs. This is brought about by the market pressures of the global corporate economy. But under the Compassionate Revolution, the reverse would happen. The kind of work style associated with a few unusually synergistic work places (some research think tanks, "quality circles," cooperative enterprises, exceptional academic departments, and so forth) would become more widespread. People would be able to circulate freely between their work site, play, and outside errands, rather than being tied down for long hours at one place, as long as they accomplished what needed to be done on the job. Vacations for *everyone* would be at least four to six weeks, not the ridiculously low two weeks that workers in the United States with less than ten years seniority now typically get. Also, the monotony of jobs would be relieved by *everyone* having sabbaticals about every seven or eight years. In the utopian society described by Marge Piercy, workers use such sabbaticals either to travel or do work different from their usual job, or both.⁵⁷

This greater freedom doesn't mean people would be a bunch of autonomous, detached individuals. The Compassionate Revolution would reverse the modern American tilt toward extreme individualism (freedom from compulsion without freedom to attain one's desires), as described by such social scientists as Christian Bay and Robert Bellah.⁵⁸ It would provide a synthesis between the individualist and communitarian outlooks. People would follow their individual consciences, but still be aware of society as

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an “interdependent web” and consider other people’s welfare in making their decisions. Children would be raised to feel themselves part of a community, and to develop a sense of responsibility toward others. But their membership in the community wouldn’t be bought at the price of conformity and wouldn’t suppress creativity.

Tolerance and Diversity

As Alvin Toffler notes, many fear that the world communications and computer web will produce “cookie cutter” identity between people, but it doesn’t have to.⁵⁹ Rather it can expand the opportunities for diversity, among both individuals and groups. In Marge Piercy’s fictional utopia, for example, there were many villages in close proximity which had different cultural backgrounds and outlooks but cooperated with each other: one African-American village, one Jewish, one Portuguese, one Lancashire British, et cetera, along with others that were more ethnically mixed.⁶⁰ People in Piercy’s novel found traveling between these villages an enriching experience, much as people now do when they take long walks in an ethnically diverse city like New York. Even if each community had a dominant tendency, it would provide a place for individuals who are different from its norm (e.g., an African-American in a predominantly Jewish town). And such an individual would be able to link by computer with similar or like-minded people in other areas.

Of course, group identity can be a tyranny of its own. That can be avoided by not assuming that a Jew, a Chicano, an engineer, or a lesbian has to have other characteristics that don’t directly relate to what defines the group. In the Compassionate Revolution, even if the *majority* of a particular group showed a certain type of behavior, both the group and people outside it would accept members of the group who deviate from that type of behavior, as long as their deviation doesn’t harm anyone.

In general, the pagan principle of “if it harm none, do what you will”⁶¹ can be the guide here. The belief that social cohesion must depend on conformity in ritual or dress or other customs can be seen as common nonsense. The common sense is that life style differences that don’t directly interfere with

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cooperative goals should be tolerated. In fact, such differences should be encouraged since they are good for people's self-expression and morale, and since they enrich the lives of others. The experimental biopsychologists David Krech, Mark Rosenzweig, and Edward Bennett demonstrated that richness and variety of sensory stimulation has a major effect on the development of mammal infant brains.⁶² So children growing up in an environment of diverse life styles and customs are likely to become more adept at solving a wide variety of problems and adapting to a range of cultural and physical environments.

But at best, people would at the same time feel rooted in their own environments and customs. The Communications Revolution that is preceding the Compassionate is characterized by a lot of rootlessness, with many people wandering between styles and not becoming emotionally invested in any of them. This is captured fairly well by the metaphors of "television channel surfing" and "internet surfing." In the Compassionate Revolution, as in some of the fictional utopian societies that come close to embodying it,⁶³ the sense of rootedness and emotional attachment would be restored in spite of a diversity lacking in traditional society.

One area where tolerance for diversity is quite controversial is sexual arrangements. But since attitudes in different spheres of life tend to reinforce one another, I think the Compassionate Revolution is more likely to occur if we can overcome some of the widespread resistance to arrangements other than heterosexual marriage. Here again, the operative rule would be "if it harm none, do what you will." If the goal is not to produce children but to create a sense of ongoing community, there is no reason for social customs to regulate whether a person has one, more than one, or no sexual partners. Nor would it matter to society as a whole whether those partners are of the same or different gender or race or ethnic background, or whether one partner (either male or female) is much younger than the other. In the Compassionate Revolution, a sexual relationship would only be frowned on if one person deceived or exploited the other, or if precautions weren't taken about pregnancy and sexually transmitted disease. Also

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there would be no double standards: behavior considered acceptable for a man would also be considered acceptable for a woman, and vice versa.*

Some couples would probably make agreements to be sexually exclusive. Once such an arrangement is made, it would still be considered wrong for one of the partners to cheat on such an agreement. But homosexual couples would have the same right to do so as heterosexual ones. Also, there would be no automatic preference for exclusive agreements over other types of agreements. For example, two people might agree to have a primary relationship but each be free to have sex with other partners on certain holidays, as the fictional Ecotopians do. Or there could be sexual agreements between more than one couple, or between one man and two women or one woman and two men, as explored by the novelist and essayist Robert Rimmer.⁶⁴ The ethical norm for all sexual relationships would be the same as it is for nonsexual relationships: is the relationship close and caring, and is physical and emotional health and freedom preserved for everyone involved?

Also in the area of family and child rearing, diversity and mutual acceptance would be the norm. “Family values” would be encouraged, but wouldn’t be restricted to nuclear families consisting of a married man and woman and their biological or adopted children. Some utopias, such as Marge Piercy’s, make biological parenthood completely unimportant. I wouldn’t go that far, because biological relationship has a mystical value for many of us, and there is no reason to discourage that feeling. But if a person simply doesn’t get along with his or her biological relatives, and achieves intimacy with non-relatives, that would also be all right. Even those of us with strong ties to our own parents or siblings or children may also have other friends close enough that we consider them quasi-family. In the Compassionate Revolution, both biological and non-biological family relationships would be valued as long as they are close and caring.

Because of the need to stabilize or reduce population, as Calhoun pointed out, the number of people choosing not to produce children would probably increase a lot. There would be more extended

* Gender-based double standards would disappear for *any* kind of behavior, not just sexual. For example, the two sexes wouldn’t receive different upbringing about when it is acceptable to cry or express feelings.

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family arrangements, however. Since contributing to society would be a norm, most adults would have some input in raising children who may or may not be their own.

The tolerant outlook toward lifestyles would be mirrored by a more open type of religious faith. A lot of people, I believe, would come to a religious outlook that falls in between, and bridges, the two traditional extremes of authoritarian theism and secular humanism. This would be a viewpoint that seeks spiritual depth and transcendence but relies on the individual's inner experience and intuition. There would probably be a wide diversity of theological beliefs and ritual observances. The number of actively religious people would increase, and many would share a few core beliefs. These core beliefs would include standards about how people should treat each other. But they would also include the sentiment captured by a recent bumper sticker: "God is too big to fit inside one religion."

The liberal religions of the current day already point the way to a desirable future religion. For example, when talking about my own Unitarian Universalist (UU) church to people outside the church, I often get asked questions like "Do you (meaning UUs collectively) believe in the hereafter?" and "Do you follow the Bible?" In the context of my church, questions like these are what Robert Pirsig called *mu* questions,⁶⁵ after a Japanese word that means "neither yes nor no" or "not appropriately posed." The people in the church somehow feel spiritually connected to one another even though they don't share a common set of detailed theological beliefs. This happens because they do share a common broad outlook about people and society. In effusive moments, I call the coherence of UU churches a "miracle."

In most cultures through the centuries, there has been a profound difference between the inner experience of religion by mystics, and the religious feeling of average people who observe the mysteries from a distance. Traditionally, average people's religious experience has tended to involve ritual, pageantry, a set of rules of conduct, and worship of something "higher" than oneself. If the Compassionate Revolution were to happen, I believe that average people's religious experience would become more similar to that of mystics. That is, people in general would reach a direct appreciation of our place in the cosmos and its higher purpose. This would require fluidity and depth of feeling and perception, which doesn't follow formal rules but integrates all major subsystems of both the mind/brain and the body. It

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would involve a long-term view of things, a perspective that transcends current needs and stresses to see larger plans. Such a religion would encourage a society that is more patient and less hurried than the present ones. This means the religious outlook would value contemplation and visionary thinking as well as moral action.

Good use of the integrative, planning capacity of the brain's frontal lobes, much discussed in this book, would become a religious obligation. In other words, self-actualization would replace obedience as the source of morality.

Beliefs about the existence and nature of God would continue to vary a lot. I suspect that none of the world's current major religions would "win" over the others. The Christian, Jewish, Moslem, Buddhist, Hindu, Confucian, Taoist, Druid, and Native American traditions, for example, are all broad enough to allow for the general outlook discussed here. At some level, "all religions are one religion," as the pagan priestess Viviane says in Marion Zimmer Bradley's historical fantasy novel, *The Mists of Avalon*.⁶⁶

However people's beliefs evolve, they would tend to move away from the traditional notion of God as an external authority figure, distinct from and eternally better than us. That notion would be replaced by an idea from the theology of Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) as described by Gregory Bateson.⁶⁷ AA says there is a power greater than the self, but the believer must formulate his or her own understanding of the nature of the power. This is a power to be submitted to and not resisted; alcoholics, for example, are discouraged from resisting the power by claiming they have the will to overcome drinking. But it's not a power that can reward or punish, nor is it a dictator. Most important, the higher power's not separate from us. It's not a righteous being contrasted with sinful humans. Rather "the relationship of each individual to the 'Power' is best defined by the words *is part of*."⁶⁸

The Alcoholics Anonymous case shows that this kind of flexible religion can help people out of serious binds in their personal lives. At the same time, the long-term perspective in that type of faith is akin to humor. This is a playful, common sense type of humor: not the tittering kind that puts down the defenseless, but a gentle kind that laughs softly at irony, coincidence, and human foibles.

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Fun!

I believe the Compassionate Revolution would make life (on the whole) more fun. Otherwise I wouldn't work for it or write about it.

Kim Stanley Robinson⁶⁹ and other utopian novelists emphasize that the best possible society wouldn't eliminate all human conflicts or personal frustrations. There would still be love gone sour, thwarted ambitions, and other kinds of disappointments. But some of the sources of unnecessary human suffering, like war and poverty, would be gone.

Some people fear that eliminating war and poverty would make life boring. That is a danger, but it doesn't have to happen if we don't want it to happen. The controlled ultra-rational mind set, the outlook that says pleasure is equivalent to reducing psychological drive, would probably lead to a society that is peaceful, affluent, and boring. As Mark Twain said, "Eternal rest sounds comforting in the pulpit. But try it for a while, and see how heavy time hangs on your hands." But a collective mind set informed by the view of neural networks stressed in this book, one that values both emotion and reason, is more likely to lead to a society that is peaceful, free of economic distress, and delightful.

Freedom from some of the sicknesses of current or past societies would probably lead to new forms of pleasure, enjoyment, and romanticism that are now barely dreamed of. The medieval Jewish sage Moses Maimonides said that the joys of heaven are to us mortals as music is to the deaf. He meant that we can only imagine pleasures that we never have experienced. If we replace "heaven" by "an optimal society on earth," what Maimonides said is still true.

But we can see the shape of future pleasures in some of our more enjoyable moments in the present world. We can also see them in studying periods when the partnership model of society experienced temporary revivals. In their historical studies, Ralph Abraham⁷⁰ and Riane Eisler⁷¹ identified several periods of "Orphic" or "gylanic" resurgence such as the early Christian period; the era of the troubadours in Twelfth Century France; the European Renaissance; and the late 1960s in the United States (which is now much maligned as immoral, but which felt exciting and creative to many of us who were young then⁷²).

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One common source of pleasure is humorous simulation of evil without actual evil. For example, a lot of sexual flirtation involves two people pretending to put each other down or talking like they are struggling for power, but actually respecting each other as equals. For another example, the Society for Creative Anachronism has people in armor pretending to fight wars but not inflicting serious injury. There is a range of other games, from Dungeons and Dragons to computer war games, in which people express their aggressions without actually harming each other. (Ernest Callenbach's fictional Ecotopians go a bit further. They hold war games in which people form into large teams that fight each other half-naked with spears, and the game ends as soon as one person is injured.) These kinds of pseudo-harmful games may function to "vaccinate" people against doing real harm to each other — just as a vaccine against a virus or bacterium is typically made from a weaker, harmless form of the active ingredient in the disease-causing agent.

Another source of pleasure comes from day-to-day tasks done cooperatively and with flair. I learned this in my family growing up, when my sister Judy was assigned the task of washing dishes and I had to dry the dishes and put them away. Once we got old enough to accept our duties gracefully, we developed a ritual of improvising songs while doing them. The songs were either about the dishes themselves or whatever else (friends, parents, politics, et cetera) was on our minds. We were both experienced in choral singing, and some of our Baroque harmonies weren't bad. Judy and I were just following a centuries-old tradition that goes back to more rural settings. The first pagan rituals were offshoots of agricultural tasks. So were many folk dances, like the English morris dances which include athletic leaping and simulated swordplay.

Go Now in Peace

The Compassionate Revolution, the triumph of common sense over common nonsense, would be the fulfillment of an age-old dream of philosophers and preachers. A hymn that captures the dream (with updated, nonsexist language) is:

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Turn back, turn back, forswear thy foolish ways.
Old now is earth, and none may count her days;
Yet humankind, whose head is crowned with flame,
Still will not hear the inner God proclaim:
“Turn back, turn back, forswear thy foolish ways.”

Earth might be fair, its people glad and wise.
Age after age our tragic empires rise,
Built while we dream, and in that dreaming weep:
Would we but wake from out our haunted sleep,
Earth might be fair, and people glad and wise.

Earth shall be fair, and all its people one;
Nor till that hour shall God’s will be done.
Now, even now, once more from earth to sky,
Peals forth in joy that old undaunted cry,
“Earth shall be fair, and all its people one.”⁷³

Many influences now conspire to make the achievement of our dream possible. These include the Earth’s population pressures and environmental crises; world-wide computer networks; the rise of the women’s movement; crises in the rationalist/dominator view of progress, which nuclear war and the Holocaust have made less attractive; and (the main topic of this book) exploding knowledge of what human nature is truly about. But our desire to achieve the dream must overcome the positive feedback between outmoded social structures and outmoded beliefs (as in the MART network of Figure 4.2). All of us need to confront our fear of taking risks and be willing to give up some short-term gains for the long-term changes that will help all of us. We need to let go not just of “business as usual” but of “social life as usual.”

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We need to challenge some of our unconscious day-to-day patterns including ways of joking, linguistic metaphors, and how we evaluate other people.

Many readers will now surely say: Okay, you've mapped out where the world should go in the next forty to fifty years, now what are the strategies for getting there? There's no "master plan" for the Compassionate Revolution. And there shouldn't be! For if a revolutionary change in society over the world were to be achieved by detailed rational pre-planning (do this in Japan by 2003, that in Africa by 2007, the other thing in Minnesota by 2010, et cetera), it would have the flavor of Russian Communism and other centralized revolutions that ultimately failed. Moreover, it would foster authoritarianism and destroy some of the very qualities we wish to foster: spontaneity, play, and responsiveness to changing and unpredictable contexts. In other words, if a detailed blueprint were to be found for bringing about the Compassionate Revolution, the results wouldn't be compassionate!

The process of change is a dynamical system that involves people's attitudes, cultures, and beliefs as well as their political and economic institutions. This is a dynamic feedback whose existence has been recognized at least since the days of Karl Marx.⁷⁴ This book doesn't go deeply into the current global political and economic institutions and the changes required in them. The global institutional crisis is discussed well by a number of other authors, such as William Greider.⁷⁵ But for political and economic change to be successful, it needs to go hand in hand with changes in prevailing cultural attitudes — that is, with an increase in the partnership-oriented common sense discussed throughout this book, and a decrease in the dominator-oriented common nonsense.

This means that the future health of our social institutions is ultimately inseparable from our day-to-day habits of how we treat each other (as the women's movement slogan says, "the personal is political" — and vice versa). It also depends on our day-to-day habits of how we categorize objects, the associations we have with words, and even what we laugh about. So positive change toward a cooperative world should be rooted in this book's messages about helpful and harmful attitudes. A few of them are reviewed here in "bumper sticker" form:

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What you get is more than what you see
Don't bite my finger, look where I am pointing
People don't want to be evil
People don't want to be neurotic
Reason and emotion aren't opposites
Reason isn't superior to emotion
Improbability isn't impossibility
The majority of a group isn't all of it
All knowledge is interconnected
Everything is a dynamical system
Order may be good or bad
Disorder may be good or bad

The achievement of the Compassionate Revolution is far from inevitable. We could, as a species, fail to learn enough about ourselves to grasp our real possibilities. But more and more people are seeing that if this happens, the results could be either physical death as a species (by environmental catastrophe or nuclear war) or spiritual death (by conformity and alienation). This growing awareness of the need for change, and fear of the consequences of not changing, makes me guardedly optimistic about the process in the long term. But given the history of human revolutions, I worry that the path to change could be violent and many people could be hurt in the short term.

The process of change becomes more painful, and less likely to succeed, when natural apprehension hardens into cynicism. In my country, cynicism is unfortunately on the rise now. A recent national poll (see, for example, the November 3, 1994, *Dallas Morning News*) shows the following results.

Question: Do you think that five years from now things in the United States will be better, worse, or the same as they are today?

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Answer: 43% of the people said they would be worse, the highest percentage since 1980.

Question: How much influence do you think people like yourself have about what the government does?

Answer: A good deal, 6%; Some, 25%; Not much, 68%; Don't know, 1%

Question: Think about all of our elected officials today. Is there one elected public official today that you admire?

Answer: Yes, 33%; No, 62%; Don't know, 5%.

It's disturbing to see such attitudes surfacing just when positive change is a real possibility. These cynical beliefs can be partly blamed on moneyed interests that are threatened by social improvements. Some people gain short-term power or profit by manipulating others' beliefs to make politics ugly and deny hope for improvement.

I pursue the theme of manipulated cynicism, with poetic exaggeration, in my own utopian novel (*The Ptutites*, in progress). Some modern American archaeologists accidentally encounter the Ptutite culture during a dig in Afghanistan. According to their own folklore, they are remnants of an ancient society that was as technologically advanced as modern America or Europe, but more cooperative, more in tune with the environment, and better at enjoying life. They keep alive their past in a small agricultural settlement, but contend with a centuries-old conspiracy that continues to suppress proof of their very existence. This conspiracy, which by now includes many powerful people in government, business, and the clergy, fears that people who know about the more cooperative Ptutites will see them as an example to be followed. That will inspire the people to see progressive change as possible and demand that it happen. So to prevent this, the conspirators operate in secret to make sure that cooperative ideas never get into the mainstream dialogue of modern society. As one of Martin Luther King's funeral orators said: "Brotherhood is not so impossible a dream as those who profit by postponing it pretend."

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As we confront our cynicism, there is great danger in *reification*, that is, acting as if social forces represent forces of nature and can't be challenged. Instead, we need to remember that "interests," whether they represent commodity producers, banks, media, governments, or clergy, are in fact composed of *human beings*. These are people who have brains, including frontal lobes (whether or not they use them properly). Such people have the same mixture of rational, emotional, instinctive, and spiritual makeup as anyone else. This gives them the freedom to decide, as individuals, that improving human relationships or doing work they enjoy is worth sacrificing some excess money or some power over others. As the men's movement activist Mark Gerzon said: "Ambitious, well-educated white men, busy scrambling for seats close to the center of power, are just as capable of change as anyone else."⁷⁶ So if the global movement for the Compassionate Revolution gains momentum, we can expect it to draw in some people who hold positions of power in the old order but decide they would prefer the new order. Being a white, middle-class, Ivy League-educated male, I once half-facetiously suggested forming an organization of such people and calling it the Oppressors' Liberation Front!

Oppressors and oppressed, male and female, rich and poor, white, black, yellow, red, and brown, we are all one under our skulls. Our brains and their neural networks don't make the Compassionate Revolution inevitable. But our brains make it possible. That's why the brain is a marvel of nature.

Chapter 12: The Compassionate Revolution

1 See, for example, the July 15-22, 1996, issue of *The Nation*, entitled: It's the Global Economy, Stupid. For a fictional account of a society dominated by multinationals, see Piercy, 1993.

2 Rifkin, 1998.

3 Callenbach, 1975; Piercy, 1983.

4 Damasio, 1994, 267.

5 Maslow, 1968.

6 Eisler, 1995; French, 1985.

7 Calhoun, 1962.

8 Calhoun, 1984, 131.

9 Calhoun, 1974.

10 Toffler, 1980.

11 Keyfitz, 1994.

12 See also Hubbard, 1998.

13 Eisler, 1987, 105-106.

14 Ibid.

15 Abraham, 1994.

16 Ferguson, 1987.

17 Saul, 1992. See also Matthew Fox's article in *Tikkun*, January/February 2000.

18 Introduction by Seymour Papert to McCulloch, 1965.

19 Eisler, 1995.

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20 See Figure 9.2 of this book.

21 *Psychology and the Promotion of a Sustainable Future*, 1995.

22 Schumacher, 1973.

21 *Ibid.*, 262.

24 Toffler, 1980, 331.

25 Schumacher, 1973.

26 Toffler, 1980, Chapter 23. See also Aldous Huxley's *Island* for a fictional account of an underdeveloped society following a "green" path.

27 Moberg, 1996.

28 Saul, 1992.

29 Bly, 1990.

30 Allen, 1994; Fasteau, 1975; Gerzon, 1982; Stoltenberg, 1989.

31 Lenz and Myerhoff, 1985.

32 Argyris, 1966, 1985.

33 *Ibid.*, 32.

34 See also Aburdene and Naisbitt, 1992.

35 Grossberg, Stephen, outgoing Presidential address, 1988 annual meeting, International Neural Network Society.

36 See, for example, Henry, 1994.

37 Hecht-Nielsen, 1986.

38 Piercy, 1983.

39 Fasteau, 1975.

40 French, 1985.

41 Eisler, 1995.

REFERENCES

42 French, 1985, 538.

43 Idem.

44 See also Russell, 1950.

45 Groth, 1994.

46 Welch, 1990.

47 Adler, 1985.

48 Callenbach, 1975.

49 Gilligan, 1982.

50 Groth, 1994.

51 Newsome, Favell, and Rincover, 1983; Skinner, 1972.

52 For a review, see textbooks on motivation, such as Reeve, 1992.

53 Csikszentmihaly, 1990; Deci and Ryan, 1985.

54 RECENT BOOK, SEE *IN THESE TIMES* FROM SUMMER (?) 1996

55 *Psychology and the Promotion of a Sustainable Future*, 1995.

56 Rifkin, 1995.

57 Piercy, 1983.

58 Bay, 1971; Bellah et al., 1985.

59 Toffler, 1980.

60 Piercy, 1983.

61 Adler, 1986, Chapter 6.

62 Krech, Rosenzweig, and Bennett, 1960.

63 Callenbach, 1975; LeGuin, 1974; Piercy, 1983; Robinson, 1990.

64 Rimmer, 1981.

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65 Pirsig, 1974.

66 Bradley, 1983.

67 Bateson, 1972, 331-335.

68 Ibid., 333.

69 Robinson, 1990.

70 Abraham, 1994.

71 Eisler, 1987.

72 Recently, there have been several historical books about the 1960s in the United States that have countered the mass media demonization of that period and presented a balanced, and often favorable, picture. These include Anderson, 1996, and Gitlin, 1987.

73 "Turn Back," Hymn #120 in *Singing the Living Tradition*, Boston: Beacon Press, 1993.

74 Marx, 1955.

75 Greider, 1997.

76 Gerzon, 1982, 236.