

WHAT ARE CHURCHES *FOR*?

by

Alton C. Thompson

*I am a man, I consider nothing that
is human alien to me.*

—Publius Terentius Afer (“Terence”) [195/185 – 159 BCE]



*Holden Lutheran church in Mt. Morris, Wisconsin. My
ancestors helped establish the original church on this site during
the pastorate of Rev. Nils Brandt, 1858 – 1863.*

August 14, 2011

Table of Contents

Preface	5
Introduction: Continuing the Tradition.....	8
Chapter 1. The Tradition in the Bible.....	12
<i>Introduction</i>	12
<i>Laws and Prophets</i>	15
<i>And Then There Were Tactics!</i>	21
<i>Commentary</i>	29
<i>The “New Testament”</i>	29
<i>Conclusions</i>	35
<i>Appendix: On “Sorelian Myth”</i>	37
Chapter 2. The Development of a New Perspective.....	38
Chapter 3. Design Specifications: Varied Views.....	47
<i>Introduction: George B. Leonard’s The Transformation</i>	48
<i>Taylor’s “Rethinking”</i>	52
<i>Goldsmit’s “Blueprint”</i>	54
<i>Liedloff’s “Continuum”</i>	57
<i>Pugh’s Tome</i>	66
<i>Slater’s “Loneliness”</i>	81
<i>A Paleolithic Prescription</i>	81
<i>Shepard’s “Coming Home”</i>	86
Ontogenetic.....	87
Social.....	89
Other.....	89

<i>Keltner's Kaleidoscope</i>	91
Survival of the Kindest	94
Embarrassment	95
Smile	96
Laughter	98
Tease	99
Touch	100
Love	101
Compassion	102
Awe	104
<i>Concluding Remarks</i>	106
Chapter 4. Human Design Specifications: My Views	108
<i>Perspective One</i>	108
<i>Perspective Two</i>	112
Chapter 5. The Survival Question: Global Warming	118
Chapter 6. The Good Society: Characteristics	129
Chapter 7. The Good Society: Getting There	141
Chapter 8. A Vehicle For Getting There	159
Chapter 9. Rethinking Church	165

Disclosure note

During my 71 years of life on earth, I have had contact with a fairly large number of different Christian denominations.

My parents (who had grown up on adjacent farms in the Mt. Morris area of south-central Wisconsin) had been raised in a Norwegian Lutheran church that my ancestors had helped establish in the early 1860s. However, early in their marriage they decided to leave that church and, with several other young couples, started the Assemblies of God church in nearby Wautoma. I was therefore raised in that church, except that during my teen years we attended a Conservative Baptist church in nearby Wild Rose (yes, wild roses grow there!).

When, in my mid 20s, I started to think about marriage, the young woman who agreed to become my wife happened to be a United Presbyterian. I therefore became one too¹, and we were married (in 1966) in the Wicomico Presbyterian church² in Salisbury, Maryland (where we were living at the time). For the next 14 years (while living in Maryland, Ohio, and then in Wisconsin again) we remained Presbyterians.

In 1980, however, we left that denomination and became United Methodists, remaining so for almost 30 years. Recently, though, we returned to the Presbyterian church to which we had most recently belonged (in Franklin, Wisconsin, a suburb of Milwaukee).

In addition to attending the churches of several different denominations on a regular basis, I have attended a Lutheran church with a friend, a United Church of Christ church with a landlord, Church of Christ-Christian churches with a brother-in-law and his family, a Catholic church that our daughter-in-law attends with our son and their family, a Friends (“Quaker”) meeting house with a friend, etc. At one time I subscribed to The Plough, a publication of the Bruderhof,³ and I have long been interested in the Amish, Mennonites, and Hutterites. In addition, I have read widely in the scholarly literature concerned with early Christianity (e.g., Charles Guignebert, Burton Mack, Bart Ehrman, etc.).

Perhaps because of this varied background, I tend to think of Christianity more in terms of orthopraxy than orthodoxy—which fact suggest that I have little interest in theological questions. Given that latter lack, some of what I write in this book may offend those who are theologically inclined. Insofar as that is the case, let me apologize in advance; but also know in advance that I try here to express my views as honestly as I know how to do.

¹ And later became an ordained Deacon in that denomination.

² The second oldest Presbyterian church in the United States.

³ See, e.g., http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bruderhof_Communities.

Preface

As my title perhaps suggests, this is a Bible-oriented book. But in having such an orientation, it would be most accurate to state that it is more *post-Biblical* than Biblical. For although I devote Chapter 1 to a discussion of the Bible, little of the later presentation makes reference to the Bible. The reasons for this “imbalance” are that I:

- Perceive a certain Tradition in the Bible, what I sometimes refer to as the *Empathic Tradition*..
- Perceive that Tradition as not having ended in “Bible times,” but as having continued through the centuries (while varying, however, in prominence).
- Believe that it is important to be informed about the *nature* of that Tradition.
- Believe that we humans have a continuing task not only to *continue* that Tradition, but to *extend* it.

Different individuals will, of course, perceive the Bible differently; and even those who perceive a tradition in the Bible will not necessarily agree as to the *nature* of that tradition. My concern here, however, is not so much with how *others* perceive, and have perceived, the Bible, as with how *I* perceive it—and *I* perceive it in terms of a certain Tradition. This perception has developed over time, having been most strongly influenced, perhaps, by an old book that I acquired in 1975—*The Social Institutions and Ideal of the Bible*, by Theodore Gerald Soares.⁴

The basic *thrust* of the Tradition that I perceive in the Bible is a concern for human *ill-being*—with its implicit value judgment that the *desirable* state for humans is one of widespread *well-being*. Furthermore, I detect a certain “theory” in the Bible as to *why* ill-being exists:

- Some individuals are engaging in *hurtful* behavior relative to others.
- Individuals who have the capability of engaging in *helpful* behaviors relative to others too often fail to do so.

⁴ New York: The Abingdon Press, 1915, At the time of the book’s writing, Dr. Soares was Head of the Department of Practical Theology at the University of Chicago. The book can be downloaded from: <http://books.google.com/books?id=Mo8cAAAAMAAJ&printsec=frontcover&dq=soares,+theodore&hl=en#v=onepage&q&f=false>.

In short, then, the Biblical theory explaining the existence of human ill-being is that (a) certain behaviors and (b) non-behaviors account for its existence; were the former *not* occurring, and the latter *occurring*, well-being would prevail, the theory implies.

What has in part motivated me to write this book is a recognition, on my part, that the “thrust” of the Bible—as I perceive it—is deficient in two ways, and that there is a need to correct those deficiencies. That is, some new ideas are needed to *supplement* those presented in the Bible:

- A new explanation of ill-being has been developed over the past few decades, an explanation that focuses on “human design specifications” and the existence of a “discrepancy.” This explanation needs to be added to the Biblical explanation.
- Given that people can have well-being only if they *exist* (!), and we humans are currently faced with the threat of “global warming,” we need to become aware of that threat, and then act on that awareness. Were that threat analogous to, e.g., the threat posed by “terrorists,” we—as average citizens—might simply assume that our leaders can, and will, “deal” with it. The threat posed by “global warming,” however, is a “different sort of animal” in that it threatens the continued existence of numerous species—including our own. And given that our leaders seem to be “asleep at the wheel” regarding this threat, it is incumbent upon us “ordinary folk” to address this threat as best we can.

In “updating” the Biblical Tradition, then, I see my task here as including the following:

- Providing some general introductory comments (in the Introduction).
- Clarifying the nature of that Tradition, and tracing its development through the Bible (Chapter 1)..
- Describing the basics of the new theory of human well-being referred to above (which draws upon the concepts of “design specifications” and “discrepancy”): Chapter 2.
- Discussing “human design specifications.” I do this in two chapters. In Chapter 3 I present the views of a number of different thinkers on the subject; and in Chapter 4 present my own ideas regarding our “design specs.”
- Providing some clarification of the nature of the “global warming” threat: Chapter 5. The reason for singling out this threat for attention is that is an extremely serious one, yet one that we *can* address. Likely, however, “global warming” will result in a severe culling of the human population by 2100 CE *regardless* of what we humans do.

- In Chapter 2 I argue that (a) our “design specifications” developed over a period of time, and (b) in the context of a certain way of life—a way of life that we “abandoned” millennia ago, and that (c) that “abandonment” is the ultimate cause of all of our problems today. What that argument implies, then, is that if we are to have widespread well-being, we will need to have *societal system change*—and in the direction of our “design specifications.” Thus, in Chapter 6 I discuss my conception of the Good Society (from the perspective of our “design specifications”). In that chapter I also suggest that the problem of “global warming” can be addressed—perhaps *best* addressed, in fact—during the process of societal system change.
- Bringing about societal system change—whether in the direction specified, or some other direction—might seem like an impossible task, but I beg to differ with that viewpoint—and in Chapter 7 offer a scenario of (or *strategy* for, if you will) societal system change.
- I regard Chapter 8 as, in many ways, the most important chapter in this book—even more important than Chapters 2, 3, 4, 6, or 7. For in that chapter I propose an institution to use for planning purposes—the Structured Interaction Group (SIG). I see the SIG as having applications in addition to planning for societal system change, and also see SIG participation as having significant benefits, of various sorts, for those participating—and develop both of those points somewhat in Chapter 8. The possibility that SIG participation may result in ideas *beyond* those presented in this book I regard as a plus—and one that does not detract from the value of the other parts of this book.
- My concluding chapter—Chapter 9—is titled “Rethinking Church,” and makes the suggestion that churches adopt the SIG as an “add-on.” My reasons for making this suggestion are that (a) we are living in perilous times, with “global warming” threatening our very continued existence; (b) I’m convinced that SIGs can play an important role in bringing about societal system change—and in a direction that will address that problem (along with our ill-being problem); and (c) I’m convinced that the churches represent ideal sites for the development and “operation” of SIGs.

I realize that many churches have an orientation to the afterlife, and in the process often downgrade life here on earth. But as I read the Bible, I see no such downgrading—the opposite, in fact. One does not need to abandon belief in the afterlife to accept my perspective on the Bible; one does, however, need to recognize that Jesus was not above saving people in a here-and-now sense—as is illustrated by his saving Peter from drowning (Matthew 14:22 – 33).

Technical note: In referring to materials available on the internet, I have provided web addresses rather than hyperlinks to those materials. Thereby, printed copies will show web addresses.

Introduction: Continuing the Tradition

Except for a possible reversion to a cultural situation strongly characterised by ideals of emulation and status, the ancient racial bias embodied in the Christian principle of brotherhood should logically continue to gain ground at the expense of the pecuniary morals of competitive business.⁵ [But only if given a good push!—ACT I]

The phrase “continuing the tradition” perhaps connotes *fixedness* and *obligation*. So that, e.g., one may—as a “traditional” person—*usually* attend a church on Sunday, feeling *obliged* to do so (e.g., because of family or local *mores*). One may *usually* have turkey and the fixin’s on Thanksgiving because “that’s the thing to do.” Etc.⁶

The tradition that I refer to in this book, however, is one that I like to capitalize (“Tradition”), and think of as (a) *dynamic* rather than static; (b) somewhat subterranean rather than clearly visible—and influential; and (c) as *seeking* the status of obligation, but failing to gain that status. That latter two facts are paradoxical given that the Tradition in question has been associated with Judaism and Christianity for centuries. However, given that this Tradition has always been a threat to the *status quo*, it’s not surprising that Judaism and Christianity have “honored” it more by putting it on display behind frosted glass than by embracing it.⁷

The Tradition, as I conceive it, is somewhat difficult to define precisely because its “thrust” has evolved over time. For want of a better term, however, I think of it as the *Empathic* Tradition.⁸ As the word “empathy” perhaps suggests, the initial expression of the Tradition especially involved empathy for others in one’s group. Over time, though, the *scope* of the Tradition

⁵ Thorstein Veblen, “Christian Morals and the Competitive System,” *The International Journal of Ethics*, Vol. 20, no. 2 (January 1910), pp. 168 - 185. Reprinted in *Essays in Our Changing Order*, by Thorstein Veblen, edited by Leon Ardzrooni. New York: The Viking Press, 1954, pp. 200 – 218. First published in 1934. The Veblen quote here is the last sentence in the article.

⁶ Count Alfred Korzybski [1879 – 1950] has stated: “The use of ‘etc.’ as a part of our evaluating processes leads to awareness of the indefinitely many factors in a process which can *never* be *fully* known or perceived, facilitates flexibility, and gives a greater degree of conditionality in our semantic reactions. This device trains us away from dogmatism, absolutism, etc.” This quote is from his “The Role of Language in the Perceptual Process,” an address delivered posthumously (by Charlotte Schuchardt) in 1950, and reprinted in Marjorie Kendig, editor, *Alfred Korzybski: Collected Writings, 1920 – 1950*. Published for the Institute of General Semantics, 1990, p. 707. That “etc.” is important to the members of this institute is indicated by the fact that their quarterly journal is entitled *ETC: A Review of General Semantics*. Korzybski’s most famous book—*Science and Sanity: An Introduction to Non-Aristotelian Systems and General Semantics*, 1994—is available online at <http://esgs.free.fr/uk/art/sands.htm>.

⁷ I have just completed a re-read of *Candide*, by Voltaire [1694 – 1778]—whom I regard as a member of the Tradition. Voltaire’s criticism of the Christianity of his time was comparable to that of Jesus’s criticism of the Judaism of *his* time, although Voltaire’s orientation was solely to criticism, Jesus’s only partially so. *Candide and Other Stories*. Translated from the French, with Introduction and Notes by Roger Pearson. New York: Alfred A. Knopf (Everyman’s Library), 1992.

⁸ I am pleased that a “Roots of Empathy” program was initiated recently: <http://www.rootsofempathy.org/>. Founder Mary Gordon’s “The Wisdom of Babies” can be found on the web site of the Greater Good Science Center (with which Dacher Keltner—discussed in Chapter 3—is associated): <http://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/2552/>.

expanded to include others of one's own species, members of other species, and even non-sentient things (such as the geologically-famous Baraboo Range in Wisconsin). What gave such developments a connecting thread was that all involved *valuing*, and *actions* stemming from that valuing.

The Tradition has been with us for several thousand years, but my focus here is not so much on its *history* as on how we might continue—in the sense of *further develop*—it today. Although my intended audience here is fellow “USans” (i.e., citizens of the United States of America), ones who are Christians in particular, those who do not fit those categories are by all means welcome to “listen in.”

In writing as a USan in 2011, I am necessarily reflecting “the times,” and thereby writing with a certain perspective on world history. In addition, the fact that I grew up in a rural/small town environment in south-central Wisconsin, etc.,⁹ has also likely affected my perspective. In making statements here I attempt to separate statements of *fact* from those of *opinion*, but I recognize that my very *selection* of facts involves tacitly-held value judgments on my part. And, of course, I recognize that what is “fact” for one person may be “opinion” for another.

Likely the Empathic Tradition can be continued/extended in several different ways; thus, in making recommendations below regarding *how* to further extend the Tradition, those recommendations should be understood as simply *my* recommendations. Others may very well have different recommendations, and they have every right to offer those other recommendations. *Different* does not, of course, necessarily mean *conflicting*; in fact, I suspect that most other recommendations concerning how to further develop the Tradition would *supplement*, rather than negate, mine.

It goes without saying that I perceive the Tradition identified and discussed here in a *positive* light. Beyond this, I feel no need to *defend* the Tradition: My goal here is not to convert others to my way of thinking, so that if some disagree with my judgment that the Tradition (as I perceive it) is a “good thing,” they are free to reject what I write, and go their own way. My intended audience is those who are willing to (a) embrace the Tradition, are interested in (b) learning more about it, and are willing to consider some thoughts and recommendations that I offer relative to the Tradition.

As my interpretation of the Tradition is such that I perceive it as having been initiated by the ancient Hebrews, and I am willing to derive my information about that group from the

⁹ Other influences (beyond those mentioned in the Disclosure note): My parents had a Norwegian-Swedish ethnic heritage, my dad was a carpenter, my reading of Everett Knight’s *The Objective Society* (New York: George Braziller, 1960; with Introduction by William Barrett) 50 years ago has had a significant influence on my thinking, etc. I should add that my recent reading of Voltaire’s *Candide* has made me realize that certain philosophical preconceptions of which I am not fully aware have also undoubtedly influenced my thinking (for my reading of *Candide* has made me aware that the philosophical questions of concern to Voltaire are of little or no interest today).

(Christian) Bible¹⁰ (more than from scholars¹¹), I use the first chapter to summarize the Bible from a Tradition perspective. Beyond that discussion, however, I provide little discussion of a “historical” nature.

The reasons that I give considerable attention to the ancient Hebrews are not only that (a) the Tradition (as I conceive it) began with them, but that (b) I believe that the churches could play an important role in implementing my recommendations. In stating this I am *not*, however, suggesting that my intended audience consists just of Christians: I would hope that those associated with other “faiths”—including those who are agnostics or atheists—would also be interested in my recommendations. At any rate, I have tried to be as non-sectarian as it is possible for me to be in writing about the Tradition.

Although I have attempted to avoid theological matters in my presentation, it is probably impossible to avoid stepping on someone’s theological toes in discussing the Tradition. If, therefore, I state anything in Chapter 1 (or elsewhere) that offends anyone’s theological sensibilities, know in advance that I have attempted here to be sensitive to the theological views of others—while also expressing my views honestly, however.

In conclusion, let me note that what has especially motivated my writing of this book is that we are living in perilous times, times that call for careful thought and action by Tradition people (and others). Were it not for the fact that I have children and grandchildren, this fact might not concern me overly much, for I am near the end of my life (I’m 71). But concern me, it does.

Were the world’s population to continue to grow at the current rate, it would be in the neighborhood of 24 billion¹² (currently it’s about 7 billion) by 2100 CE. But it’s unlikely that the world’s population will be of that magnitude by then, for two reasons. First, even if Earth and its atmosphere were to remain unchanged between now and then, it’s unlikely that Earth could *support* 24 billion people in 2100 CE. Second, it’s likely that the surface of Earth *will* continue to change as a result of human activity, and (especially) that Earth’s atmosphere will change—i.e., that global warming will continue to occur, and at an increasing rate. Indeed, noted scientist James Lovelock “believes global warming is now irreversible, and that nothing can prevent large parts of the planet becoming too hot to inhabit, or sinking underwater, resulting in mass migration, famine and epidemics.” Lovelock stated in 2008, in fact, that he expects about 80% of the world’s population to be wiped out by 2100 CE.¹³

¹⁰ The version that I have used is *Good News Bible: The Bible in Today’s English Version*. New York: American Bible Society, 1976.

¹¹ My reason for this preference: The Bible is more readily accessible than is the scholarly literature—both physically and in terms of readability.

¹² See <http://www.johnstonsarchive.net/environment/wrjp365p.html>.

¹³ Decca Aitkenhead, “Enjoy Live While You Can,” *The Guardian*, March 1, 2008. See <http://www.guardian.co.uk/theguardian/2008/mar/01/scienceofclimatechange.climatechange>.

Of course, Lovelock may very well be wrong—but in being either too pessimistic or too optimistic. For (regarding the latter) there’s even the possibility that of the numerous species that will be extinct by 2100 CE, ours will be among them. Given this possibility, the fact that I have a personal interest in the human future, and have respect for Lovelock (as a scientist—but not as one with answers to our problems) I feel that I have a responsibility to write this book. If it turns out that Lovelock’s prediction is seriously off the mark, and my recommendations (based, as they are, on his “pessimistic” view) are implemented, no harm will be done; indeed, I’m confident that positive results will obtain from them whether or not Lovelock is right.

I learned recently that my great-great grandfather—Torje Tjøstolvsen Solberg—in leaving the Tvedstrand area of Norway (south of Oslo) in 1852 (his oldest son, Tjøstolv, had preceded him in 1848, going to Chicago) for south-central Wisconsin paid for the passage to the United States of 60 individuals in addition to the members of his family! I feel an obligation to honor his generosity by doing whatever I can to ensure (so far as is possible) that his descendants, and the descendants of those whom he helped (all of whom are unknown to me), will *have* a future. (But not *just* such people, of course.)

It occurred to me recently that there is a profound irony associated with our current perilous situation: It appears that environmental change played a key role¹⁴ in human evolution,¹⁵ but that our actions as “civilized” humans—actions stemming ultimately from the control mentality that developed in some members of our species millennia ago—have so impacted that environment that human-induced environmental change may result in our demise before the century is out: The environment created us (in a sense), and we show our “gratitude” to it by so despoiling it that it then becomes the agent of our extinction! This *could* happen—even if we do all in our power as humans to prevent it from occurring. However, as we cannot know the future for certain, it is incumbent upon us to proceed as if we were serious about saving our species (and many of the other species with which we share this planet), and with confidence that our efforts will not be in vain.

¹⁴ And that “natural selection”—as defined by Charles Darwin [1809 – 1882] in *The Origin of Species* (1859)—played no role whatsoever. See, e.g., my “Obstacles to the Good Society: Supposed and Actual.” (<http://dissidentvoice.org/2011/04/obstacles-to-the-good-society/>)

¹⁵ Steven M. Stanley, *Children of the Ice Age: How a Global Catastrophe Allowed Humans to Evolve*. New York: W. H. Freeman and Company, 1996.

Chapter 1. The Tradition in the Bible

In discussing the (Christian) Bible, from a Tradition perspective, my “plan” is to begin with the Law, then make some comments relative to the prophets, next comment on the four (canonical) gospels¹⁶ (i.e., on Jesus), and conclude with a brief discussion of the other “books” that comprise the “New Testament.” The ideas that I discuss are presented in rough order¹⁷ of when they were uttered (or written down); my interest, however, is more in the ideas *per se*, rather than in *when* they may have been presented initially (or written down later), or by *whom*.

Introduction

In identifying and commenting upon the specifics of the Empathic Tradition in the Bible, it is useful to begin with what would appear to be the earliest version of the Ten Commandments found in the Bible. What I am referring to here is the version that appears in Exodus 34:12 - 26 (identified in Exodus 34:28 thusly: “... the words of the covenant, the Ten Commandments,” and preceded in v. 11 with these words: “Obey the laws that I am giving you [Moses directly] today. I will drive out the Amorites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites, as you advance [toward the Promised Land].”):

1. Do not make any treaties with the people of the country into which you are going: this could be a fatal trap for you.
2. Tear down their altars, destroy their sacred pillars, and cut down their symbols of the goddess Asherah.
3. Do not worship any other god [for there *are* other gods].
4. Do not make any treaties with the people of the country [you are about to enter].
5. Do not make gods of metal and worship them.
6. Keep the Festival of Unleavened Bread.
7. Every first-born [¹⁸] son and first-born domestic animal belongs to me.
8. No one is to appear before me without an offering.

¹⁶ Which fact should not be interpreted as meaning that I regard the non-canonical gospels—such as the *Gospel of Thomas*—as inauthentic.

¹⁷ How rough an order is a matter that does not concern me.

¹⁸ Given that *I* am a first-born son, and a descendant (for several generations, at least) of first-born sons, this law “speaks” to me.

9. Do not work on the seventh day, not even during plowing time or harvest.
10. Keep the Harvest Festival, and the Festival of Shelters.
11. Three times a year all of your men must come to worship me.
12. Do not offer bread made with yeast when you sacrifice an animal to me.
13. Do not keep until the following morning any part of the animal killed at the Passover Festival.
14. Each year bring to the house of the LORD the first grain that you harvest.
15. Do not cook a young sheep or goat in its mother's milk.

Note here first that there are 14 “commandments” here rather than 10 (given that 1 and 4 are virtually identical). And note, second, that although they are referred to as “commandments,” they are all better referred to as *regulations*,¹⁹ with none of them being *laws*. (This in contrast to the version of the Ten Commandments²⁰ given in Exodus 20:1 - 17, 6 of the 10 in that set being laws.)

Note also (the non-obvious—and also rather embarrassing—point) that to attribute commands to God is to perceive (if but implicitly) God as a king-like being. An important implication of *that* fact is that one thereby “admits” that God cannot *cause* people to engage (or refrain from engaging) in certain behaviors, but can only *order* them to. That is, God is not *omnipotent* (a Greek concept, and therefore one foreign to the Bible); and in not being omnipotent, God does not, then, have the *ability* to create the cosmos and its components! So that the God who, in Genesis, creates the cosmos *cannot* be, logically, the same God who in, e.g., Deuteronomy, issues commands.²¹

The Bible contains evidence²² that the early Hebrews were *henotheistic* (i.e., believed that there was a multiplicity of tribal gods), which belief gradually gave way to *monotheism* (i.e., the belief

¹⁹ *Regulations* can be thought of as cultic in nature; *laws*, in contrast, can be thought of as commands having an ethical content.

²⁰ I find it interesting that many professing Christians place great stock in the Ten Commandments, not realizing, seemingly, that in a very real sense Paul’s letters (his discussion of the Holy Spirit in particular) make those Commandments passé. For an interesting (if old) discussion of the Ten Commandments see “History and the Commandments” in (pp. 271 - 75) Louis Wallis, *The Bible is Human*. New York: AMS Press; a reprint of the 1942 edition published by Columbia University Press. I was introduced to Wallis by a sociologist while taking a short-course a number of years ago at Ohio State University.

²¹ The suggestion is that those who formulated these commands, in attempting to make the concept of God meaningful to their fellow Israelites, chose here to present God as a king-like Being having authority over His “subjects, but did not intend to suggest that God was *merely* king-like.

²² For example, in the reference to the god El Shaddai in Exodus 6:3.

that there is but *one* true God). The Bible does not, however, resolve the contradiction identified above regarding the *nature* of God—and has the Law-giving God somehow (without explanation) also be the Creator God. In a sense, the Bible “resolves” (or at least has been so interpreted) the conflict by making the claim that God created humans with “free will,” and therefore able to choose either good or evil. But this assertion—and its associated “explanation”—amounts to a “shifty sophistication”²³ in that it raises the question: If God had the ability to give humans free will, how is it that subsequently He lacked an ability to *withdraw* that “gift”—and then intervene in human affairs? And if He *has* continued to reveal truths to people (a type of intervention), how is *that* consistent with His decision not to intervene in a more direct way? Etc.

But these are theological issues that need not detain us here; besides, I lack talent in the field of intellectual contortionism! Let us get back to the matter at hand, and allow the theologians to wallow in their speculations regarding these esoteric matters—while there is still paid employment available to them!

To return to this “primitive” version of the “Ten Commandments”: Why their lack of ethical content? What I would hypothesize as the answer is that this version was created at a time in Hebrew history when the tribes were small enough to be extended families. As such, sharing would have occurred as a matter of course; and as a consequence, there would have been no *need* for ethical laws.²⁴ That is, *mores*—unwritten “laws”—existed in the society such that when neediness was observed, that neediness was automatically “ministered to” by fellow tribal members able so to do (and this was done largely because humans, *qua* humans, are so “programmed.”²⁵). Because the *mores* of the tribe “prescribed” much of their behavior, members of the tribe had no need for laws as *we* know them (i.e., written rules of an ethical nature). As tribes expanded in size, however, not only did a breakdown of the *mores* occur; with their breakdown, people began to *neglect* those of their fellows with physical needs. Indeed, there

²³ A phrase derived from this sentence: “. . . the courts, standing on a secure and familiar natural-rights footing, have commonly made short work of the shifty sophistications which trade-union advocates have offered for their consideration.” Thorstein Veblen, *The Theory of Business Enterprise*. Clifton, NJ: Augustus M. Kelley, Publishers, 1973, p. 329. With prefatory note by Joseph Dorfman, and a review by James Hayden Tufts. Originally published by The Macmillan Company, 1904. This book is available online at <http://books.google.com>.

²⁴ For an excellent discussion of tribal societies see David Maybury-Lewis, *Millennium: Tribal Wisdom and the Modern World*. New York: Viking, 1992. A more comprehensive, if less sophisticated (and recent), book is Robin Clarke and Geoffrey Hindley, *The Challenge of the Primitives*. New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1975. For an excellent “tribal” critique of American society see Kent Nerburn, *Neither Wolf Nor Dog: On Forgotten Roads With an Indian Elder*. Novato, CA: New World Library, 1994.

²⁵ After all, we are “born to be good.” See Dacher Keltner, *Born to Be Good: The Science of a Meaningful Life*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2009. I discuss this book in Chapter 3 below.

even began the *exploitation*²⁶ of one's fellows—thereby adding to whatever neediness already existed.²⁷ Because some of those with memories of the “old days” perceived (or was revelation involved here?) that their society was “going downhill,” they took matters into their own hands and initiated the Hebrew Tradition (which, in the future, I refer to simply as the Tradition).²⁸

Why view the commands listed above as antecedent to the birth of the Tradition, given that they utterly lack in ethical content—i.e., are not in the least oriented to empathy and human well-being? Because they represent an attempt to influence the behavior of their fellows, and were attributed to God (as if God were a king-like Being²⁹). In fact, one can argue that the *reason* they were attributed to God was the hope (if but unconscious), on the part of those who created the commands, that such an attribution would lend force to the commands—would, i.e., *motivate* people to follow the commands. When, later, laws of an *ethical* nature appeared on the scene, there was precedent for stating them as commands issued by God—with, again, the reason (probably not recognized consciously by those involved) for so doing being to motivate their fellows to follow the commands.

Laws and Prophets

The ethical laws/commands that *did* develop in Hebrew society can be classified as follows (see below). Indeed, let me add at this point that, in my opinion, these ethical laws form the very heart of the Law—a point that I will defend later in this chapter. Note that although the commands of the familiar version of the Ten Commandments were directed at *all* Hebrews, the following are directed specifically at the society’s “haves”—and have their basis in the fact that

²⁶ Yes, Mr. Marx, exploitation didn’t begin with Capitalism. It just became more subtle. See, e.g., Chapter V (“Das Kapital,” pp. 91 - 129) in Michael Harrington, *Socialism*. New York: Bantam Books, 1973. Originally published by Saturday Review Press in 1972.

²⁷ It is interesting to read I Samuel 8, wherein the “leaders of Israel” told Samuel that he was getting old, so that he should “appoint a king to rule over us” Samuel was displeased with this request, and in praying to the LORD was told “I am the one they have rejected as their king.” The LORD then told Samuel to “listen to them, but give them strict warnings and explain how their kings will treat them.” Samuel then took the LORD’s advice, and proceeded to list all of the disadvantages of having a king—e.g., “He will take a tenth of your flocks. And you yourselves will become his slaves.” But the people “paid no attention to Samuel, but said ‘No! We want a king, so that we will be like other nations, with our own king to rule us and lead us out to war and to fight our battles.’” What’s interesting here is that the writer/editor—writing long after the events “reported”—knew that exploitation had begun in Hebrew society especially after the rise of the kingship institution, so that the “warnings—or predictions—attributed here to Samuel were actually historical facts.

²⁸ Note here that I am not denying the existence of God, but am only denying that the laws being referred to here were literally given to the early Hebrews by God. Which is *not* to say, however, that revelation, in some meaningful sense, may not have been involved with their formulation. Regarding this latter point, I would add that we *cannot* know with any degree of certainty one way or the other.

²⁹ Indeed, it appears that this attribution of commands to God occurred sometime *after* the rise of the kingship institution, and that the king was used as the model for God.

neediness existed in the society. In addition, it is important to note that a tacit assumption underlying these laws is that the needy were in that state through no fault of their own: They were needy because they were widows, their husbands having been killed in battle; they were needy because they were orphans, their parents having been killed; they were needy because they were poor, this resulting from bad weather or an army stealing their crops/animals, etc.; strangers might very well be needy for the simple reason that they were away from home; etc. (We moderns need to keep this fact in mind, because it does not follow that because the needy in ancient Hebrew society were needy through no fault of their own, that that is necessarily true in *our* society today. However, given our propensity—as “good Christians”—to “blame the victim”—for his laziness,³⁰ bad habits, etc.—we moderns need to avoid our tendency to “blame the victim” in knee-jerk fashion, without any analysis of *why* someone is needy.)

(The “ameliorative” laws referred to below are ones that are oriented to existing situations; “restorative” ones, in contrast, have as their intention the restoration of a previously-existing situation. The actions demanded of commands can be either direct or indirect, and also may be either injunctions—i.e., commands to *do* something—or prohibitions—i.e., commands to *not* do something. Finally, commands can be thought of as varying in their degree of specificity—although it is not always easy to decide *where*, on the specific-abstract continuum, one should place a given command.)

³⁰ “Laziness” is one of those words in our language that simultaneously describes (perhaps with accuracy) and explains (wrongly, usually).

I. Ameliorative

A. Direct

1. Injunctions

a. Abstract

b. Specific

2. Prohibitions

a. Abstract

b. Specific

B. Indirect (all of which are specific)

1. Injunctions

2. Prohibitions

II. Restorative

A. Abstract

B. Specific.

Let us next, then, identify specific laws under the above headings:

1. Abstract Direct Ameliorative Injunctions

- a. Exodus 21:9 - If a man buys a female slave for his son, he is to treat her like a daughter. (From our perspective today this is an abstract injunction, but in the context of ancient Hebrew society—a “high context” society³¹—would not have been.)
- b. Leviticus 19:18 – Don’t take revenge, or hate; love your neighbor as you love yourself.
- c. Leviticus 19:32 - Respect the elderly [again, a law that would have had a more concrete meaning in ancient Israel than it has for us].
- d. Leviticus 25:35 - You must provide for a poor neighbor.

³¹ The concept of “high context” societies and “low context” ones was introduced by Ronald Simkins, *Creator & Creation*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1994. The book is available online at <http://moses.creighton.edu/simkins/creation/>.

- e. Deuteronomy 5:16 - Respect your parents [also a law that would have had a more specific meaning for the ancient Hebrews].
- f. Deuteronomy 10:19 - Show love for foreigners—because *you* were once foreigners [i.e., said formerly to have been in captivity in Egypt].

2. Specific Direct Ameliorative Injunctions

- a. Exodus 21:10 - If a man takes a second wife, he must continue to give the first wife the same amount of food and clothing, and the same rights.
- b. Exodus 22:26 - If you take a cloak as a pledge, give it back in the evening [for I am merciful, God says in the next verse].
- c. Deuteronomy 15:7 - 9 - If a fellow Israelite is in need, don't be selfish; lend [don't give!] him as much as he needs.
- d. Deuteronomy 24:15 - Before sundown, pay the wages of those to whom you owe wages.

3. Abstract Direct Ameliorative Prohibitions

- a. Exodus 22:21 – Don't mistreat foreigners.
- b. Exodus 22:22 – Don't mistreat widows or orphans.
- c. Exodus 23:9 – Don't mistreat foreigners; you know how it *feels* to be one.
- d. Leviticus 19:33 – Don't mistreat foreigners, for you were once foreigners yourselves.
- e. Leviticus 25:46 – Don't treat your fellow Israelites harshly.

4. Specific Direct Ameliorative Prohibitions

- a. Exodus 20:1 - 17 - The Ten Commandments. [Most of these can be considered as rather specific in nature: don't murder, commit adultery, steal, accuse others falsely, desire another man's house/wife/slaves, etc.]
- b. Exodus 21:20 – Don't kill a slave or you will be punished [*how* not being specified].
- c. Exodus 22:25 – Don't require interest in loaning to a poor man.
- d. Exodus 23:6 – Don't deny justice to a poor man [i.e., be even-handed].
- e. Leviticus 19:13 – Don't take advantage of [i.e., exploit] anyone, don't rob anyone, don't hold back anyone's wages.

- f. Leviticus 19:14 – Don’t curse a deaf man, or cause a blind man to stumble [literally, one assumes].
 - g. Leviticus 25:37 – Don’t charge a poor neighbor any interest; don’t make a profit from the food you sell him.
 - h. Deuteronomy 5:7 - 21 [The Ten Commandments are repeated here, in a version very close to the Exodus 20 version.]
 - i. Deuteronomy 23:19 - In loaning to a fellow Israelite, charge no interest.
5. Specific Indirect Ameliorative Injunctions (an interesting category!—in that there are more ethical laws in this category than in any other one)
- a. Exodus 16:23 - The seventh day is to be a day of rest, dedicated to the LORD. [John Dominic Crossan has made this brilliant observation regarding the significance of the “sabbath” day: “The sabbath day represents a temporary stay of inequality, a day of rest for everyone alike, for animals and humans, for slaves and owners, for children and adults. Why? Because that is how God sees the world. Sabbath rest sends all alike back to symbolic egalitarianism. It is a regular stay against the activity that engenders inequality on the other days of the week.”³²] ³³
 - b. Exodus 23:11 - On each seventh year let the land rest, but the poor may eat whatever grows on it during that year.
 - c. Leviticus 19:9, 10 - In harvesting, leave the grain at the edges of the field for the poor; and leave the grapes in the vineyard that were missed for the poor and foreigners. [The law of *gleaning*.]³⁴
 - d. Leviticus 23:22 [The gleaning of grain is referred to again.]
 - e. Leviticus 23:42 - During the Festival of Shelters everyone is to live in temporary shelters for seven days. [What Crossan has stated regarding the sabbath day—see above—would also seem to be applicable here in that some temporary leveling would be involved, and this might help to renew feelings of empathy on the part of “haves” relative to the “have nots,” and other needy people, in their midst. Such a conclusion is reinforced by the fact that the wording here for verses 42 and

³² *The Birth of Christianity*. HarperSanFrancisco. New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1998, p. 189.

³³ One might add that having a Sabbath, so conceived, might play some role in helping the rich become more empathetic, and therefore begin to engage in behaviors that would tend to move the society in a more egalitarian direction. But *did* it? *Has* it? Evidently it *did* not. Nor *has* it.

³⁴ Note the empathy implicit here: Allow the needy to maintain their sense of self-respect by giving them an opportunity to acquire food for themselves, rather than simply giving to them—thereby making them feel that they are in debt to you. What profound insight into human psychology! It takes one’s breath away!

43 is: “All the people of Israel shall live in shelters for seven days, so that your descendants may know that the LORD made the people live in simple shelters when he led them out of Egypt. He is the LORD your God.”]

- f. Leviticus 25:4 - 6 - Let your land rest every seventh year. But even though it is not cultivated, it will provide food for you, your slaves, your hired men, foreigners, and domestic/wild animals [but not the poor?!].
- g. Deuteronomy 5:12 - 14 - Observe the Sabbath; this includes foreigners in your midst, and slaves.
- h. Deuteronomy 14:22 - 29 - [The law of the tithe (so often misrepresented—and utterly so—by the churches!).] Each year take a tenth of your production and celebrate with it; however, on each *third* year the tithe is to go to [what we today would call “food pantries”] for Levites [who have no property], foreigners, orphans, and widows.
- i. Deuteronomy 23:24 - In walking on a path in someone’s vineyard you can eat grapes along the way, but are not permitted to take any away in a container.
- j. Deuteronomy 23:25 - In walking on a path in someone’s grain field, you can eat the grain that you can pull off with your hands, but don’t cut any with a sickle [or carry any away in a container?].
- k. Deuteronomy 24:19 - 21 - After gathering your crops, leave what’s left for foreigners, widows, and orphans. The same for your olive orchards and grape vineyards.
- l. Deuteronomy 26:12 - Every third year give the tithe to the Levites, foreigners, orphans, and widows.

6. Specific Indirect Ameliorative Prohibitions

- a. Leviticus 25:23 - Land cannot be permanently sold, because it belongs to God. [Attention real estate agents!]

7. Abstract Restorative Laws

- a. Leviticus 19:18 - Love your neighbor as yourself [a law that should be followed not only in the here-and-now, but in a fashion that restores a situation wherein neediness should not occur, or occur but rarely³⁵].

8. Specific Restorative Laws

- a. Exodus 21:2 - All Hebrew slaves are to be set free in the seventh year.

³⁵ Such an interpretation appears reasonable in the context of some of the other laws discussed here.

- b. Leviticus 25:10 - 12 - The fiftieth year [referred to as the Jubilee year] is to be set apart. All property that has been sold is to be restored to the original owner or his descendants; all slaves are to be returned to their families.
- c. Deuteronomy 15:1 - At the end of each seventh year, cancel the debts of all those who owe you money [except for foreigners, verse 3 adds!].

We have, then, here an amazing set of laws, created for an agricultural society within which relatively little (on a *per capita* basis) long-distance trade occurred. This fact needs to be pointed out, because it is clear that the laws are not meant to be applied in an urban-industrial society such as the one we are living in at present. Still, they are of interest to us moderns because they demonstrate that a relatively simple society is capable of creating a rather sophisticated—and thoughtfully humane—set of laws. What I find of particular interest is the laws that specify *indirect* actions to help those in need. There is tacit recognition here that few want handouts, because their dignity as human beings is affected adversely in accepting handouts. Therefore, those who created this set of laws had the sensitivity—the genius!—to create laws that enabled the needy to receive help while maintaining their self-respect. This is not to say that outright giving is not commanded in these laws, but the inclusion of the various injunctions for helping others in *indirect* ways seems to suggest to those to whom they were directed (i.e., “haves”) that in helping others they give consideration not only to the *physical* needs of others, but the *psychological* need on the part of recipients for retaining their sense of dignity. What wisdom!

And Then There Were Tactics!

What’s interesting about the ethical laws presented in the Pentateuch is not just the laws themselves, but the *tactics* used by the writers to *motivate* people to follow those laws (another contribution to the Tradition on the part of the early Hebrews). For example, consider the following familiar—and beautiful—passage:

“Israel [said Moses], remember this! The LORD—and the LORD alone—is our God. Love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength. Never forget these commands [from God] that I am giving you today. Teach them to your children. Repeat them when you are at home and when you are away, when you are resting and when you are working. Tie them on your arms and wear them on your foreheads as a reminder. Write them on the doorposts of your houses and on your gates.” (Deuteronomy 6:4 - 9)

The writer in this case is using what might be termed a “reminder” strategy, advising his fellows to do various things to remind him of the laws (*all* of them, not just the ethical ones)—in the hope that they will then *follow* the laws (i.e., commands that they have attributed to God).

Three additional such tactics can be identified:

- Attempts to generate feelings of empathy for the needy in one’s society.
- Promises for obedience.

- Threats for disobedience.

Let us briefly address each in turn (but combining the second and third), for these, too, represent contributions to the Empathic Tradition.

1. Feelings of Empathy

- The Hebrews are frequently reminded in the Pentateuch that they were slaves in Egypt, and that the LORD had delivered them from that slavery. For example, in Deuteronomy 24:21, 22 we find these words: “When you have gathered your grapes, do not go back over the vines a second time; the grapes that are left are for the foreigners, orphans, and widows. Never forget that you were slaves in Egypt; that is why I have given you this command.”

This reminder seems to have two functions. First, by reminding the Hebrews that they (or their ancestors) had been (supposedly³⁶) slaves, the expectation was that they would feel empathy for slaves and other “have nots.” In fact in Exodus 23:9, we find: “Do not mistreat a foreigner; you know how it *feels* to be a foreigner, because you were foreigners in Egypt.” (italics added) Second, by reminding the Hebrews that God had (allegedly) delivered them from slavery, an implicit contract (“covenant”) was being stated: “I have done for you (have delivered you from slavery), now it’s your turn to do for me—and what I want you to do is obey my laws.”³⁷ The motive in bringing in the concept of a contract here was (evidently) to make the early Hebrews feel *obligated* to God: They should obey the commands not only because God commanded them so to do, but because they were *obligated* to obey them.³⁸

- Institution of the Sabbath day, by giving everyone (including animals) a day of rest, is an equalizer (if but temporary). Besides that, it gives “haves” a time to reflect on how they treat others relative to what God wants—so that they can resolve to do better during the upcoming week. [They may not actually have *done* so, but at least those who created these laws presumably *hoped* that they would.]

³⁶ The historical question of whether they actually *had* been or not is beside the point.

³⁷ Perhaps this can be regarded as the initial version of the covenant concept. Preceding such a command, however, is, e.g., this one: “Do not spread lies about anyone, and when someone is on trial for life, speak out if your testimony can help him. I am the LORD.” (Leviticus 19:16) A covenant is a sort of contract between God and humans—but one written and imposed by God! In this case we simply have a command of God: “Do such and such simply because I am ordering you to do it.” A covenant involves both God and humans, with the earliest true covenant in the Bible taking the form, “I delivered you from slavery in Egypt, now it’s your turn to do something for me (i.e., obey the laws that I have given you). Later, the covenant took on a new form: “Do for me (i.e., follow my laws), and I will bless you (as a people).

³⁸ To be extremely anachronistic here, one might say that the covenant concept involved “Sorelian myth” (referring here to Georges Sorel, 1847 – 1922). See the Appendix to this chapter.

- c. The Festival of Booths is also not only a (temporary) leveler, but a period of time that brings “haves” and “have nots” together. This, along with the fact that it gives “haves” a fairly lengthy time to reflect on how they treat others, may cause “haves” to improve their relationships with their less fortunate fellows. I use the term “less fortunate” deliberately here because the Bible’s dominant perspective on societal position seems to be that if one is a “have not,” this is not because one is lazy, etc., but, rather, because one either is being exploited by a fellow Hebrew, or has simply had bad luck. Indeed, the Hebrew Scripture’s explanation for why poverty exists in a society seems to be: “Haves” are ignoring God’s laws! How different is the attitude in our society!—in which instead of blaming “haves” for the existence of poverty (neediness in general), we “blame the victim”—and thoughtlessly at that.
- d. The Passover festival might also be mentioned under the “empathy” heading, especially given that it is specifically a “remembrance” festival that commemorates God’s (alleged) deliverance of the Hebrews from slavery in Egypt. As one of the three “pilgrim festivals”—the other two being Sukkot (Tabernacles) and Shuvuot (Pentecost)—it would have resulted in people traveling to Jerusalem. Given that this would have resulted in contact with fellow Jews in other “economic” (and other neediness situations—e.g., the lame) circumstances, these three festivals may have been designed, in part, to induce feelings of empathy in the society’s “haves” for those less fortunate than themselves.

2. Promises for Obedience, Threats for Disobedience

There is a famous passage in Deuteronomy (11:26 - 28) that reads: “Today I [the LORD] am giving you the choice between a blessing and a curse—a blessing, if you obey the commands of the LORD your God that I am giving you today; but a curse, if you disobey these commands and turn away to worship other gods that you have never worshiped before.” What should be noticed in this passage is that the LORD is not addressing Hebrews as *individuals* but as a *collective*. In Jesus’s time the Law was being given an individualistic interpretation, but centuries earlier that was by no means the case: The Pentateuch has the Law being given to a *people*, and the blessings promised for obedience and curses threatened for disobedience are also directed at the Hebrews as a *people*.

Thus, the *promises* given in Leviticus 26:3-6 are directed at the Hebrews as a *people*: “If you [as a people] live according to my laws and obey my commands, I will send you rain at the right time, so that the land will produce crops and the trees will bear fruit. Your crops will be so plentiful that you will still be harvesting grain when it is time to pick grapes, and you will still be picking grapes when it is time to plant grain. You will have all that you want to eat, and you can live in safety in your land. I will give you peace in your land, and you can sleep without being afraid of anyone. I will get rid of the dangerous animals in the land, and there will be no more war there.” Likewise, the punishments for disobedience are to be borne by the group, and are essentially the converse of the blessings for obedience. (See, e.g., the passage in Leviticus 26 that begins with verse 14.)

Note here the important point that although the ethical laws listed above are *implicitly* directed at the society's "haves," they are *explicitly* directed at the Hebrews as a *people*. Thus, the society's "have nots" are not made to feel that they are somehow people of a lesser sort—so that again, psychological considerations were involved in how the laws were stated (even though the intentions were different). (Unfortunately, this fact that the laws were *seemingly* directed at the Hebrews in general became misused; for as thinking, at a later point, became more individualistic, "haves" began turning these laws, and specifically the covenant concept, on its head—a point given more attention shortly, in discussing Jesus's contribution to the Tradition.)

Interestingly, although the *promises* in the Pentateuch for obedience to the Law are directed at the *group*, and not individuals, such is not the case regarding *punishments* for disobedience. Many such punishments are intended for *individuals* who violate certain specific laws. For example, a number of such cases are given in Exodus 20, including this one (v. 14): "If a man marries a woman and her mother, all three shall be burned to death because of the disgraceful thing they have done; such a thing must not be permitted among you." In cases where the violator is *not* condemned to death, there may be punishment combined with the offering of a sacrifice. This is not to say that all of the sacrifices (using that term generically) discussed in, e.g., Leviticus have the purpose of atoning for wrongful behavior (e.g., fellowship offerings are for a different purpose³⁹), but the principal purpose of sacrifices appears to be atonement for sins committed—sacrificing ostensibly having the purpose of somehow⁴⁰ helping to restore the harmony that had existed prior to the "tearing of the societal fabric" associated with law-breaking.

A few pages earlier I suggested that ethical laws (and specifically ones other than those in the Ten Commandments) are the "heart" of the Law. I have just completed a review of the ethical laws, but given that the Pentateuch contains many laws other than ethical ones, what is my basis for asserting that the *ethical* laws are the principal ones? What I would point to in response is that in Deuteronomy 15:4, 5 we find: "Not one of your people will be poor if you obey him [God] and carefully observe everything that I [Moses] command you today." Note that we have a *promise* here, but it is one that is different from other promises in the Old Testament. It makes no reference to blessings that will be received by the Hebrews as a people if they obey God's commands, nor does it appeal to self-interest on the part of the society's "haves." It doesn't even try to convince people to obey God's commands because it is their turn to do for God (God having done for *them*, by liberating them from their Egyptian captors). Nor even does it try to induce feelings of empathy for the poor in the society's "haves." A very unusual—and interesting—statement in Deuteronomy, then!

The "promise" here, note, is simply an off-hand—and ostensibly unimportant—commentary on what the *societal situation* will be like if God's laws are followed. Not just the ethical laws,

³⁹ Indeed, it seems to be generally true that *sacrifices* are for atoning for sins committed, *offerings* (a special type of sacrifice) serve some other purpose.

⁴⁰ Just *how*, it being by no means clear.

mind you, but *all* of them. But take notice: The clear suggestion here is that ***the writers of these five books had as their ultimate interest the restoration of a society within which (physical) neediness was absent.*** John Dominic Crossan would have us believe (as I noted earlier) that these writers wanted the creation of a radically egalitarian society, but I see Crossan's claim as overstating⁴¹ the Bible writers' intentions. Rather, I believe that a more reasonable conclusion is that they wished to restore a situation within which physical neediness would be absent. (They were writing, I might add, so as to give the impression that they were writing while the Hebrews were living in Palestine under the institution of kingship.)

A few paragraphs earlier I reached the conclusion that the writers of these five books (constituting the Pentateuch) had as their ultimate interest the restoration of a society within which (physical) neediness was absent. This conclusion leads us another conclusion, one that is as surprising as it is important. In fact, the importance of this conclusion cannot be overstated. It is: **If it can be said that the Law had a purpose, this means that the various laws constituting the Law can—and should—be thought of not as ends, but as (mere) means.** This is a “bombshell” of a conclusion, of course, because it means that those—whether Christians or Jews—who have a fixation on the Law are, in effect, treating the Law as an idol!! (See, e.g., Deuteronomy 5:9.) They are failing to comprehend that there is a *goal* underlying the Law, that goal being the absence of physical neediness in the society.⁴²

Once we come to understand the laws of the Old Testament as *means* rather than ends, we are in an intellectual position to make at least six further conclusions:

- Laws that appear in the Bible should not be embraced merely because of that fact. Rather, one should recognize that some of those laws tend to contribute to the end that I have identified here (i.e., minimal physical neediness), some do not. The former should be heeded, the latter should be ignored—the underlying principle here being that rules that are appropriate for one society at a given time may not be for another.
- Laws *other* than those appearing in the Bible may be relevant for us today. After all, our urban-industrial society has little in common with the sort of society that existed in Bible times.⁴³

⁴¹ One might also argue the *opposite*, however! Given our many “design specifications” as humans (see Chapters 3 and 4), one might argue that what motivated these lawgivers—unaware, of course—was The Discrepancy (discussed in the next chapter).

⁴² I am not, of course, saying here that a society should not establish certain rules, officers to apprehend rule-violators, courts to try the accused, and jails to punish the convicted (and/or programs to rehabilitate them). I *am* saying, however, that the legitimate *end* of laws is that of helping to minimize neediness in the society. Unfortunately, typically the elite of a society establish laws that they believe will further *their* interests, without any thought whatsoever to the existence of neediness in the society.

⁴³ See, e.g., Edward Alsworth Ross, *Sin and Society: An Analysis of Latter-Day Iniquity*. New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1973 (with Introduction to the Torchbook Edition by Julius Weinberg). Originally published by Houghton, Mifflin and Company in 1907.

- *Means* other than laws may be relevant for achieving the end. For example, working for societal system change (a topic that was very much “on the table” in the United States during the nineteenth century⁴⁴) may be a better way to occupy one’s mind and time than working to implement rules (including working to implement governmental programs). Granted that the restorative “laws” of the Pentateuch obviously had as their intention bringing about societal system change; it does not follow, however, that those of us desiring today to bring about such change should think of law-generation as the appropriate path to such change.
- Although the focus of the Pentateuch seems to be on addressing physical needs, there is no reason why we should limit ourselves to such needs. Indeed, I will argue shortly that a notable part of Jesus’s contribution was that he was sensitive to the psychological and spiritual needs of others. Not that such sensitivity is not also present in the Pentateuch as well, however: As I argued in discussing laws which involve helping others in an *indirect* way, one can assume that behind such laws was tacit recognition that people have self-esteem needs which must not be violated; there is a certain dignity in being human, and to impact that negatively is to commit a serious sin.
- The end of well-being need not be thought of just in terms of humans; there is no reason why animals cannot be included. Indeed, I would even assert that, e.g., geological features should be included—such as Devil’s Tower in Wyoming, drumlins in Wisconsin, etc.—the idea here being that given that we humans developed “in nature,”⁴⁵ we have a need for nature to be maintained, not desecrated.
- The end of reducing neediness itself can—and should—be challenged. That is, rather than thinking *just* in terms of working to reduce neediness (in all of its manifestations) in this world, we should recognize that today humans (and other animals) face a unique problem—the possibility that of the numerous (perhaps about 60%) species likely to be extinct by the end of this century, humans will be among them! Therefore, we should recognize that people (and other animals) can have well-being only if they *exist* (!), and should take “global warming” seriously, and work to address that problem with the seriousness that it deserves. Besides, it is well to keep in mind that “global warming” is not only a future threat to many species (including our own), but in the here-and-now is causing problems especially for the poor of our world.⁴⁶ One reason, indeed, why I advocate (in Chapter 8) the creation of a new sort of “meeting” institution is that I see such meetings as possible vehicles for finding answers to this problem—answers that will be acted upon with intelligence and energy.

⁴⁴ In the form of “utopian” novels, for example, such as Edward Bellamy’s *Looking Backward*, 1888.

⁴⁵ See, e.g., Paul Shepard, *The Tender Carnivore and the Sacred Game*. New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1973; and also his posthumously-published (Paul died in 1996) *Coming Home to the Pleistocene*. Washington, DC: Island Press/Shearwater Books, 1998. The latter book is discussed in Chapter 3 below.

⁴⁶ See, e.g., Dr. J. Matthew Sleeth’s book: <http://www.amazon.com/Serve-God-Save-Planet-Christian/dp/1933392010>.

Thus, perceiving the laws of the Pentateuch as “mere” means—with not all of them even relevant for the end in question, and there being other (indeed *better*) means—is very liberating intellectually. Would that the Christians in our midst who are so fixated on, e.g., the Ten Commandments that they want them on public display everywhere would come to realize how misguided their viewpoint is. How lacking in true understanding of the Bible they are—to the extent that they sin by making an idol of the Ten Commandments!

The end that I have identified above (i.e., that all humans have well-being) is present in the Pentateuch, but one needs to *study* the Pentateuch carefully before this end becomes obvious. Is it present elsewhere in the “Old Testament”? Yes, it is present many places, but I would like to conclude my discussion of the “Old Testament” (i.e., Hebrew Bible) by referring to just a few passages in “prophetic” books that support my thesis. First, in Hosea 6:5, 6 we find: “What I [God] want from you is plain and clear. I want your constant love, not your animal sacrifices.” How does one love God? One loves God by obeying his commands—or, more generally, by doing his will. What is that? Working for, e.g., a situation within which there is no neediness of any type. Note that one way of perceiving this passage in Hosea is to regard it as Hosea’s summary, if not restatement, of the Law! So that Hosea’s Law contains just the law of loving God, and what *that* involves is doing God’s will—which is to work to eliminate neediness (such work being a form of worship).

Amos expressed much the same point of view. In Amos 5:21 - 24 we find: “The LORD says, ‘I hate your religious festivals; I cannot stand them! When you bring me burnt offerings and grain offerings, I will not accept them: I will not accept the animals you have fattened to bring me as offerings. Stop your noisy songs; I do not want to listen to your harps. Instead, let justice flow like a stream, and righteousness like a river that never goes dry.’” What beautiful language! And what wonderful content!—that what God wants primarily is that you treat your fellows well. We must keep in mind here, of course, that the “justice” that Amos was referring to was not the legalistic sort of justice that *we* think about, but justice in the sense of people getting what they deserve. And what is it that they deserve? They deserve to have their various needs met; thus, those of you whose needs *are* being met (and more) have an obligation to become aware of neediness among your neighbors, and somehow minister to that neediness. Don’t be like a typical American (guided by the values of greed, materialism, and selfishness) and make your primary goal becoming a member of the Billionaire’s Club! In effect, then, Amos also introduced a new Law, consisting of just one positive ethical command: Do justice—which involves ministering to the neediness that exists around you.

Finally, let me close this discussion of the Tradition in the prophets by quoting (once more) a beautiful passage from Micah (6:6 - 8): “What shall I bring to the LORD, the God of heaven, when I come to worship him? Shall I bring the best calves to burn as offerings to him? Will the LORD be pleased if I bring him thousands of sheep or endless streams of olive oil? Shall I offer him my first-born child to pay for my sins? No, the LORD has told us what is good. What he requires of us is this: to do what is just, to show constant love, and to live in humble fellowship with our God.” In a sense we have a new point added here, for Micah is saying in effect that to

be part of the Tradition is not only to do what God wants in *general* terms (i.e., work to eliminate neediness), but do what God wants in more *specific* terms. And, Micah seems to be saying, one can only gain knowledge regarding *that* by *communing* with God, by staying “in tune” with God—by being ever alert to *revelations* that God might choose to give one. This might be done via petitionary prayers wherein one petitions God for guidance; but might also be done, e.g., via “meditative prayer”⁴⁷ and other means (see, e.g., Chapter 8). Again, we in effect have with Micah a restatement of the Law, such that the Law is solely of a Tradition nature—i.e., the Law is about *proper* worship of God (rather than “worship” in the conventional sense).

Micah’s allusion to communing with God raises the question: Does God only reveal truths to those who explicitly seek guidance from God? And in answering that question, I suggest that we consider the case of Samuel. In Chapter 3 of I Samuel we have that wonderful story of Samuel being called by God. Samuel had not *sought* anything from God; rather, God chose to speak to Samuel. The lesson here is that we should not be surprised if God reveals truths to certain people even though they have not asked God for revelations. I think here, for example, of Thorstein Veblen, one of the most creative social thinkers ever to have existed, in my opinion—and one of the great contributors to the Tradition. In reading his brilliant works one may not gain the sense that Veblen was a very spiritual man. In reading his biography,⁴⁸ however, one learns that spiritual matters were uppermost in his mind—the suggestion being that he didn’t write about his ideas on such matters for publication because it would not have been fashionable (or “professional”) so to do.

In concluding my discussion of the Old Testament I feel compelled to quote what I regard as the most beautiful passage in the entire Old Testament—a passage that is “Traditional” if ever there was one: Job 29:12 - 17:

When the poor cried out, I helped them.

I gave help to orphans who had nowhere to turn.

Men who were in deepest misery praised me, and

I helped widows find security.

I have always acted justly and fairly.

I was eyes for the blind,

and feet for the lame.

I was like a father to the poor

⁴⁷ See, e.g., L. Robert Keck, *The Spirit of Synergy: God's Power and You*. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1978.

⁴⁸ Joseph Dorfman, *Thorstein Veblen and His America*. New York: The Viking Press, 1934. See, e.g., p. 58.

and took the side of strangers in trouble.

I destroyed the power of cruel men

and rescued their victims.

What we have here is another restatement of the Law, in effect (rather than boastful statements of an old man). A restatement that is not only specific in content, but suggests that one should do God's will, not out of sense of obligation, or a sense that one will receive a reward, but a simple sense that it is a *privilege* to do God's will. What a tremendous sentiment!

Commentary

Christians often distinguish between "Law" and "Grace," and see the latter as superseding the former. However, not only is this viewpoint unjustified on a Biblical basis; it also evinces an ignorance of the Law. When Christians think of the "Old Testament" Law, they usually think of the Ten Commandments, and thereby think of the Law as consisting basically of a series of negative statements—don't do this, and don't do that. But as the above discussion demonstrates, the basic thrust of the Law (the ethical portion in particular, but not exclusively that portion) is to shape human behavior in such a way as to contribute to well-being on the part of all members of the society.⁴⁹ And as my classification of laws indicates, the body of law consists of a remarkable variety of *types* of laws. There is, then, no reason to think of the Law in derogatory terms.⁵⁰

There is, however, the "bottom line" question of how *effective* were the laws and preaching of the prophets in bringing about the Good Society in Palestine. And here one must admit that there does not appear to be any evidence that either had much effect! Talk about air being let out of a giant—and beautiful—balloon!

The "New Testament"

This brings us, first, to Jesus and his contribution to the Tradition.⁵¹ And the first point I would make here is that to understand the nature of Jesus's "ministry," one must understand an important feature of the situation into which Jesus was born. An aspect of that situation was the Roman presence, true, but much more important was religious developments that had been occurring in Jesus's society. It appears that after the return from Babylonian Exile (which occurred between about 597 and 520 BCE), thinking in Israel became less and less communitarian/societal in character and more and more individualistic. One manifestation of

⁴⁹ The same could be said, of course, regarding the preachings of the prophets.

⁵⁰ An acquaintance of mine wrote, in an email, that the "Old Testament" is "sexist, homophobic, elitist, racist, [it advocates] genocide . . .," etc. Needless to say, his perspective is not shared by me!

⁵¹ Were one to summarize Jesus's "ministry" in a single sentence, one might say that its purpose was to comfort the disturbed, and disturb the comfortable. This formulation has its origin in the newspaper (Chicago) writings of Finley Peter Dunne [1867 – 1936], who wrote under the name "Mr. Dooley." However, Dunne had used "afflicted" rather than "disturbed." See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Finley_Peter_Dunne.

this change (devolution!) was that the covenant concept promulgated in Jesus's time was an inverted—and therefore perverted—version of the Old Testament covenant concept. The Old Testament covenant concept was that if you (as a *people*) follow my laws (whose thrust is to minister to the needy), I (God) will bless you (as a *people*).

The version of the covenant concept taught in Jesus's day, however, was subtly different—sufficiently different, however, to in effect *invert* the Old Testament covenant. For the new “covenant” was: If I as an individual am doing well, this is because I am being blessed by God; and I can infer from *that* fact that I am behaving in a fashion pleasing to God. On the other hand, if someone is needy, that person obviously is *not* being blessed by God, which means that he is behaving in a manner *displeasing* to God. If not the person in question, then some *ancestor* of the person. That is, a person is needy because he has sinned, or an ancestor had—a point brought out in the amusing story of Jesus's healing of a man born blind in John 9.⁵² Given such an interpretation of the covenant concept, one no longer had an obligation to *minister* to the needy. Rather, one now had a good reason to “*blame the victim.*” One could now argue that the needy person had brought his problems on himself; so that not only did one not *need* to help the needy, but it might very well be *sinful* so to do!

It would seem that the critical occurrence in Jesus's life was his coming to know the content of Hebrew Scripture; for as he learned about God's will as expressed in Scripture, it became increasingly obvious to him that there was a serious disconnect between the Law and covenant in Scripture and what was being taught, in his time, by the “teachers of the Law.”

Therefore, when he reached an age of sufficient maturity (likely about 30 years old), he resolved that, like (his cousin?) John the Baptizer (who may have been an Essene for a time?) he, too, needed to inaugurate a ministry. He saw his mission as being to:⁵³

- Educate his fellows as to the nature of the True Law of God (i.e., that love of neighbor is the fundamental law)—often using parables,⁵⁴ such as the Good Samaritan parable of

⁵² Is this story actually about *spiritual*, rather than *physical*, blindness?

⁵³ I do not deny herein that “Throughout the earliest accounts of Jesus'[s] words are found predictions of a Kingdom of God that is soon to appear, in which God will rule.” (Bart D. Ehrman, *Jesus: Apocalyptic Prophet of the New Millennium*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1999, p. 128.) Indeed, Luke has Jesus assert (Luke 4:43) that his purpose was (not to die a sacrificial death on a cross to atone for our sins but, rather) to preach the coming Kingdom of God. Jesus, however, evidently convinced few people regarding this prediction, which prediction turned out to be a false one anyway. (Somehow this prediction of God's imminent coming got “converted,” with some early Christians, into the prediction that Jesus would be returning “soon” (i.e., the Second Coming)—an expectation that one finds in all of Paul's extant letters.) Which fact would seem to suggest that Jesus should be of little interest to us today. One can, however, argue that Jesus's ministry is still relevant today in that the *values* he espoused are ones that we can accept today; and that because the Biblical “Kingdom” in “Kingdom of God” is best thought of as *kingship*, we moderns can retain Jesus's “Kingship of God” idea by arguing that one allows God to be one's king if one follows God's commands—with the commands relevant for today including one's that are *revealed* today.

⁵⁴ Note that Jesus's “love of neighbor” command (e.g., Mark 12:29 – 31, derived from Leviticus 19:18) can itself be regarded as a sort of parable—given that it, like a true parable, demands interpretation.

Luke 10:25 - 37. Perhaps the most notable, however, of Jesus's teaching efforts is the famous "plan of salvation" passage in Matthew 25:31 - 45, a portion of which is (vs. 35, 36):

I was hungry and you fed me, thirsty and you gave me drink; I was a stranger and you received me in your homes, naked and you clothed me; I was sick and you took care of me, in prison and you visited me.

These six "injunctions"—which constitute an "operationalization" of the love command attributed to Jesus—are repeated *four times*—obviously to make the point that "this is what my ministry is all about, folks! Maybe if I repeat myself enough times, you'll get the point!" (Unfortunately, Christianity has *not*; and when, e.g., one is handed a tract containing a "plan of salvation," it likely makes no reference whatsoever to this passage!!)

- Inform his fellows that they were being taught an inverted, and therefore fraudulent, version of God's law (a point embedded, e.g., in the Good Samaritan parable). Matthew 23, in a sense, supports this fact, although what that chapter focuses on is the Greek concept of "hypocrisy" (suggesting that the writer of that gospel lacked a good understanding of the "roots" of Jesus's ministry). For example, Matthew 23:23: "How terrible for you, teachers of the Law and Pharisees! You hypocrites! You give to God one tenth even of the seasoning herbs, such as mint, dill, and cumin, but you neglect to obey the really important teachings of the Law, such as justice and mercy and honesty."
- Do what he, as an individual, could do to address neediness in his society (e.g., heal and exorcize). Whether the healings/exorcisms reported in the gospels actually occurred,⁵⁵ the point is that the author's intent in including these stories was to make it clear that he regarded Jesus as being in the Tradition.
- Preach the coming Kingdom of God. That preaching had two functions. First, it was an attempt on his part to motivate "haves" to change their thinking and behavior: By threatening them with the "bad news" that God was coming down soon, he hoped that they would change their ways out of fear regarding how God would judge them when He arrived. Second, it was an attempt to give the needy (false?) hope—the "good news" that when God came, their lot would definitely improve.

Of the many profound statements attributed to Jesus, the following are among my favorites (all drawn from Luke's gospel):

⁵⁵ It's possible that some of the *stories* in the gospels referring to miracles performed by Jesus were based on *parables* that Jesus had told—the writer of the gospel not being aware of this fact.

- And he went on to say to them all, “Watch out and guard yourselves from every kind of greed, because a person’s true life is not made up of the things he owns, no matter how rich he may be.” (12:15)
- Much is required from the person to whom much is given; much more is required from the person to whom much more is given. (12:48)
- . . . the people of this world are much more shrewd in handling their affairs than the people who belong to the light. (16:8)

If I have any quarrel with Jesus, it is with his statement in Matthew 7:12 that the Golden Rule can be thought of as summarizing the Law and the prophets. Not that my disagreement with Jesus on this claim is a serious one, but it seems to me that one can be a follower of the Golden Rule, and still be “possessed” by a desire to *acquire* things—a behavioral tendency *not* given approval by Jesus. In addition, I believe that being a follower of the Golden Rule does not preclude one from being a *selfish* person. Indeed, I suspect that these two behavioral tendencies are correlated in that if one is “driven” by a desire to acquire ever more (in goods, fame, power, etc.), one will *also* tend to be selfish. Humans are complex creatures, of course, with most of us being a mixture of good and bad; certainly that’s true of me—just ask my wife!

(My assertion of a correlation above reminds me that Prof. Paul Piff and associates at the University of California, Berkeley, have found, as the result of recent research, that “generosity increased as participants’ assessment of their own social status fell. Those who rated themselves at the bottom of the ladder, gave away 44% more of their credits [associated with the experimentation] than those who put their crosses on the top [i.e., an “X,” to indicate rung on the success ladder, the top rung representing the highest social position], even when the effects of age, sex, ethnicity and religiousness had been accounted for.” “A final experiment attempted to test how helpful people of different [social] classes are when actually exposed to a person in need. This time participants were ‘primed’ with video clips, rather than by storytelling, into more or less compassionate states [of mind]. The researchers then measured their reaction to another participant (actually a research associate) who turned up late and thus needed help with the experimental procedure. In this case priming made no difference to the lower classes. They always showed compassion to the latecomer. The upper classes, though, could be influenced. Those shown a compassion-inducing video behaved in a more sympathetic way than those shown emotionally neutral footage. That suggests [that] the rich are capable of compassion, if somebody reminds them, but do not show it spontaneously.”⁵⁶ A finding that may prove useful for the progress of the Movement!)

Not only did Jesus issue directives—often embedded in parables—concerning what one should and should not do. He not only tried to do what he could—directly and indirectly (via his preaching directed at “haves”)—to address the physical neediness present in his society, but also

⁵⁶ The article appeared in the *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* (in July of 2010), but I have here quoted from <http://www.economist.com/node/16690659>.

psychological/spiritual neediness. This point has, e.g., been pursued by Robert C. Leslie, who has examined a number of the encounters reported in the gospels involving Jesus in the light of logotherapy.⁵⁷ And related to this, Elton Trueblood,⁵⁸ e.g., has noted that the Jesus of the gospels often used humor, evidently (tacitly) recognizing thereby the healing power of humor.

Conveniently, in his Appendix entitled “Thirty Humorous Passages in the Synoptic Gospels,” on p. 127, Trueblood listed the particular passages in the gospels that he had given attention in his book. The modern reader of these passages may, of course, fail to see the humor in these passages, for two reasons. First, we are separated in time by many centuries from the passages. Second, most of them are so familiar to us today that we give little thought to them.

One of the most relevant portions of the gospels for us moderns is found in John’s gospel, the references to a “Helper” in 14:15, 14:26, 15:26, and 16:7. This “Helper” is identified as the Holy Spirit in 14:26. The significance of this reference is that the writer of John in effect is telling us that just as God had guided *Jesus’s* life, so is it possible that after Jesus’s departure, God—via the Holy Spirit—can guide *our* lives as well. (Meaning, e.g., that we should look to the Holy Spirit for guidance, in preference to the Bible—a conclusion calculated to cause Martin Luther, e.g., to turn in his grave!)

The significance of these references to the Helper in John’s gospel should be recognized as the “bombshells” that they are. For they suggest that, on the one hand, one should not use the Bible as one’s primary authority—so that so-called “Bible churches” are, *by their very nature*, actually *unBiblical!* And suggest, on the other hand, that no individual should be treated as an authority either (a point solidified in Matthew 23, wherein Jesus is made to say that one should call no one Father except our Father in Heaven). Rather, one should look to present-day revelation—something the Quakers, for example, do.⁵⁹

With Paul of Tarsus we have recognition that the Holy Spirit can be looked to not only for *guidance* (i.e., ideas as to what to do) but for “*possession*”⁶⁰—an idea, by the way, not absent from the “Old Testament.” For in I Samuel 9:5 - 7 we find (Samuel speaking to Saul): “At the entrance to the town you will meet a group of prophets coming down from the altar on the hill, playing harps, drums, flutes, and lyres. They will be dancing and shouting. Suddenly the spirit of the LORD will take control of you, and you will join in their religious dancing and shouting and will become a different person. When these things happen, do whatever God leads you to do.”

⁵⁷ *Jesus and Logotherapy: The Ministry of Jesus as Interpreted Through the Psychotherapy of Viktor [E.] Frankl.* New York: Abingdon Press, 1965.

⁵⁸ *The Humor of Christ.* New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1964.

⁵⁹ I would add that we should also look to scholarship.

⁶⁰ For a brilliant discussion of relevance here see Stevan L. Davies, *Jesus the Healer: Possession, Trance, and the Origins of Christianity.* New York: Continuum, 1995.

Paul recognized (Romans 7) that although in his *mind* he knew what he should and should not do, what he called his “human nature” (what today we would more properly term his *socialized* nature) caused him to do what he abhorred, and to refrain from doing what he wanted to do. He added, however, that (Chapter 8) if one is filled with the Holy Spirit (which, v. 6, “results in life and peace”), one will be able to overcome one’s “human nature”—one’s (supposedly) innate sinful nature. And in Galatians 5:16 - 25 Paul wrote at some length regarding the behavioral contrast between being controlled by “human nature” as opposed to the Holy Spirit.

Interestingly, although Paul claimed to admire the Law (e.g., Romans 7:12 and 8:22), and Acts 22:3 has him claim that had studied under Gamaliel (a famous rabbi of the time), his letters give one no indication that he knew the first thing about the Law! So that although the Pentateuch is very definitely reflected in the gospels, it is not at all reflected in any of Paul’s letters!

Still, Paul must be recognized as an important contributor to the Tradition in that he recognized that it is not enough to have a set of rules: Just because one has a thorough knowledge of what one should, and should not, do, it does not follow that one will be able to *follow* those rules. What one needs, in addition (suggested Paul), is to be filled with the Holy Spirit, so that one’s behavior will be controlled by the Holy Spirit. Unfortunately, Paul, in his letters, provided no guidance as to *how* one can become Spirit-filled. Neither did Paul even hint at societal system change as a means to bring about the sorts of behavior that he advocated—thereby demonstrating his ignorance of the Law and prophets. (And suggesting that those who look to Paul as an authority on the Law are demonstrating *their own* ignorance of the Law!)

In concluding this brief discussion of the New Testament, I would like to make reference to the rather prosaic Letter from James—which may not have been written by Jesus’s brother James,⁶¹ but likely *does* express the views of many of the early (Jewish) followers of Jesus.⁶² At 1:27 James states: “What God the Father considers to be pure and genuine religion is this: to take care of orphans and widows in their suffering and to keep oneself from being corrupted by the world.” In effect, James repeated Jesus’s injunction to love the neighbor, but in a more concrete form; and also recognized that there is a dominant worldview “out there” that guides most people, but must be resisted—because it is “out of tune” with the love of neighbor command. In addition, James makes the point that what’s important is to be *religious*—rather than a Jew, Christian, or whatever. Martin Luther had a low opinion of the Letter of James—but all *that* means is that he thereby demonstrated his inability (or was it unwillingness?) to discern the plain message of the Bible.

⁶¹ See, e.g., Jeffrey J. Bütz, *The Brother of Jesus and the Lost Teachings of Christianity*. Rochester, VT: Inner Traditions, 2005.

⁶² Peter J. Gomes states, in fact: “Recent scholarship places the Epistle of James as first by date [of the books constituting the “New Testament”], followed by I Thessalonians.” *The Good Book: Reading the Bible with Mind and Heart*. New York: Avon Books, 1996, p. 16.

Conclusions

The Bible is a complex book. It contains numerous literary genres. And numerous perspectives have been expressed regarding what the Bible is “about.” For example, in a single book (!) we find these “summaries” of the Bible:⁶³

- “It [the Bible] is the account of a faithless people and a faithful God who seek constantly to renew their relationship each with the other.”
- “If the Bible were just about the successful and the pious it would be little more than a collection of Horatio Alger tales or Barbara Cartland romances. It could aspire at best to the status of *Aesop’s Fables* or a Norse epic. What makes the Bible interesting and compelling is the company of humans beings who through its pages play their parts in the drama of the human and the divine.”
- “The Bible is an account of that great company of people who have both sought and found a way. We should take them seriously, for they have much to tell us.”
- “The Bible, if nothing else, is a book about the dangers of false trust.”
- “. . . the Bible is about the formation of a fellowship, a community of men and women who are reminded over and over again that they are not alone, not on their own but part of a communion . . .”
- “If the Bible is about anything, it is about the subtle, ruthless, remorseless persistence of evil.”
- “[. . . the hypothetical book] *Why Good People Do Bad Things.*[⁶⁴] That is what we have been talking about all along, and it is no small subject of the Bible as well.”
- “. . . the Bible, if it is anything at all, is an essay in the genealogy of temptation.”
- “. . . the Bible . . . is a book not about limits but about infinity, and visions, not history minus but poetry plus.”
- “The Bible . . . is the record of those for whom mystery and meaning are not antithetical but a life’s work in the growing knowledge of self and of God.”

It would be foolish of me, therefore, to claim that my “take” on the (Christian) Bible is the only possible one; neither do I claim any degree of “orthodoxy” for my views on the Bible. Indeed, it should be clear that—objectively speaking—there *is* no “orthodox” view of the Bible: One person’s *orthodoxy* is another person’s *heresy*! It behooves us, then, to be tolerant of one another’s views—not only regarding the Bible, but other matters as well. Indeed, we also need

⁶³ Gomes, *op. cit.*, pp. 65, 185, 188, 191, 196, 246, 259, 267, 326, and 327.

⁶⁴ The allusion here is, of course, to Rabbi Harold Kushner’s *When Bad Things Happen to Good People*.

to be tolerant of *ourselves* (!), in that we need to give ourselves permission to change our minds when we become convinced that that is necessary. Thus, the views that I have expressed above regarding the Bible I think of as *tentative*—as subject to change, if I become convinced that more accurate views exist, and therefore should be accepted.

My perception of the Bible is that its primary orientation is to human (preventable) ill-being—and that that orientation is both its strength and its weakness. It is a strength in that a concern for the well-being of others is surely a mark of the genuine human being. And the Bible offers a remarkable range of ideas regarding how more widespread human well-being can be achieved. But the focus of the Bible is especially on the *physical* needs of people—although some of the laws of the “Old Testament” (e.g., that of gleaning) reveal a concern for a psychological need for maintaining one’s self respect as well. And although some portions of the “Old Testament” suggest that the answer to the ill-being problem would be societal system change, that suggestion is never developed very fully—perhaps because Israeli society itself was basically an agricultural society.⁶⁵

Human societies today are still in need of solving the ill-being problem, and members of the Empathic Tradition will continue to do what they can in service of that goal. They will also, however, extend their feelings of empathy beyond our own species—and, perhaps more importantly, focus more seriously on the threats that face us as humans. A later chapter of this book (Chapter 5) gives some attention to this matter, but at this point I would mention the problem of “global warming” because it threatens the very continuation of our species. Given that our current involvement in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Pakistan seems to be primarily based on a desire to extract petroleum from the region—most of which would be intended for eventual dumping into the atmosphere—it is clear that our leaders are obsessed with the short-run—and with corporate profits—rather than human survival. Given those facts, there is little reason to be optimistic about the human future. However, I try to ignore that fact, and in the remaining chapters of this book (but Chapters 6 and 7 in particular) offer my ideas regarding how to address our various problems.

⁶⁵ Therefore, it could not have produced a Richard H. Tawney—author of, e.g., *The Acquisitive Society* (1921) and *Equality* (1931). The former can be read on and/or downloaded from the <http://books.google.com> web site.

Appendix: On “Sorelian Myth”

One way of thinking about my proposals (in Chapter 6 and 7) regarding societal system change is that they involve “Sorelian myth.” Georges Sorel [1847 – 1922],⁶⁶ was a Frenchman who is usually categorized as a “syndicalist.” “Syndicalism grew out of trade union associations that espoused the utopian vision of one day controlling their industries and, eventually, the political state.”⁶⁷ Sorel is most noted for having written *Reflections on Violence* (1908), a book in which he developed the “notion of the general strike as a mythic belief, the widespread acceptance of which would prompt collective action by workers as well as soften employers’ resolve against concessions.”

I have never read Sorel’s book (and likely never will—and certainly do not advocate the use of violence, as did Sorel), but gather from my reading *about* Sorel that he developed the idea of a general strike not so much as an event that was *likely* to occur, but as an *idea*—a “myth”—that, if *accepted* by people, had the capability of *motivating* them to take action. At any rate, this is how I think of “Sorelian myth;” and I refer to my recommendation of societal system change as such a myth because I view it not so much as a serious recommendation, as a set of ideas that (I hope) has the potential to motivate people. To motivate them to *think* about how to respond to “global warming” (Chapter 5) and The Discrepancy (Chapter 2), and also motivate them to themselves develop “action plans” in response to the ideas that they develop.

I stating “not so much as a serious recommendation” I do not mean to suggest, however, that I have serious doubts regarding my proposal. True, I believe that *if* its implementation begins to occur, the Movement will change in character over time—so that, e.g., although the Cooperative Eco-Community (CEC, Chapter 6) remains the society’s basic sociological unit, over time those communities will become increasingly differentiated one from another, and developments will occur that cannot be anticipated. However, my hope is that if (I prefer “when”!) the Movement gets underway, not only will there be a concerted effort to save as much of the world’s population from global warming, but to help others (those who *want* help, that is) achieve a way of life as close to their “design specifications” (Chapters 3 and 4) as humans as possible.

⁶⁶ See, e.g., http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Georges_Sorel.

⁶⁷ http://www.cooper.edu/humanities/classes/coreclasses/hss3/g_sorel.html .

Chapter 2. The Development of a New Perspective

Not a new perspective to *replace* the Tradition ideas presented in the Bible, but one to *supplement* them: Let me make that point clear at the outset. But the fact of the matter is that there *is*, at present, the need for a new “Traditional” perspective to emerge, and the purpose of this chapter is to provide an argument in support of that claim (so far as well-being is concerned, at any rate).

As we saw in the previous chapter, the orientation of the Bible is to commandments and suggestions—regarding what one should, and should not, do. The “doing” being referred to was doing relative to others, either other specific individuals or others in a certain group (e.g., the poor, widows, orphans). Thus, even though the *end* tacitly sought by these “laws” was of a *societal* nature—i.e., an absence of ill-being in the *society*—the *means* used was of an *individualistic* nature. That is, a basic assumption underlying the “laws” was that some semblance of the Good Society could be achieved if those with resources would use their resources to help—if only⁶⁸ in an indirect way—those lacking sufficient resources, and refrain from engaging in any actions that might be hurtful to others.

Over time, in Western history, there grew a dim awareness that there was more to the ill-being story than hurtful actions of some directed at others and bad luck—a fact indicated by “pictures” that some began creating of the Good Society. The first major such effort was *The Republic* written by Plato [c427 BCE – c348 BCE]. But there is also evidence of that growing awareness in the Bible itself. For in Deuteronomy 28:30 we find this (negatively stated) “utopian” condition: “You will build a house—but never live in it. You will plant a vineyard—but never eat its grapes.” We find that utopian situation stated positively, however, in Isaiah 65:21, 22: “People will build houses and get to live in them—they will not be used by someone else. They will plant vineyards and enjoy the wine—it will not be drunk by others.” And in Jeremiah 31:4, 5: “Once again I will rebuild you. Once again you will take up your tambourines and dance joyfully. Once again you will plant vineyards on the hills of Samaria, and those who plant them will eat what the vineyards produce.”⁶⁹

But such a utopia would be a rather strange one, from a Biblical standpoint, for two reasons. First, because it makes no reference to the presence of priests, one must assume that it *has* no priests! Why? Because there is *no need* for them, given that no one would be sinning (i.e., harming others) in such a society, one would assume. Second, this utopia has no need for the love command (except with reference to child care?), because no physical neediness exists in the society. Given these features, and my assumption that the writers of the Bible were wise enough to recognize that there will always be poor people, orphans, and widows in the society, it would

⁶⁸ “Only” is a misleading word to use here given that the use of indirect means would show sensitivity to the need to maintain a sense of self-respect on the part of recipients.

⁶⁹ See also Deuteronomy 6:10 – 11, Amos 9:14, and Micah 2:2.

seem that they believed that what should be strived for is not a perfect society, but the minimization of physical neediness in the society.

This is not to say that they did not favor societal system change: Certainly the restorative laws that they developed had precisely that intent—and note that their strategy for bringing about societal system change was the institution of certain (restorative) laws. It is impossible to believe, however, that these writers believed that a perfectly egalitarian society could be created: By no means were they fools! Still, the presentation of these (exceedingly brief!) utopian discussions in the Old Testament must be regarded as a contribution to the Tradition, for they “authorize” us moderns to not only critique our society but develop our own visions of the Good Society (a sort of activity that was rather common during the nineteenth century⁷⁰), and generate ideas as to “how to get there.” Not only a “good” society, I should add, but one that we can *survive in!*

The thrust of thinking since Plato’s time has been to de-emphasize law-creation in favor of developing ideas regarding the nature of the Good Society, and how to usher it in (under the assumption that law-generation will not achieve that end⁷¹). Indeed, the reason I place (as one example) Charles Fourier⁷² [1772 – 1837] in the Tradition is not because he was a notably “spiritual” person but, rather, because he proposed the creation of “phalanxes”⁷³—i.e., small, rather self-sufficient communities—as (what he thought of as) “building blocks” of a new society.⁷⁴ That is, Fourier proposed an *institutional* solution to the problem. Which is not to say, however, that the Bible fails to present such solutions. For what is, e.g., the law of the tithe if not an institution? A different sort of institution than the one proposed by Fourier, true, but an institution nonetheless.

Significant developments in this realm, however, awaited the rise of biological/evolutionary thinking, this occurring during the latter half of the nineteenth century. The name that came to prominence regarding this sort of thinking during this period was that of Charles Darwin [1809 - 1882], but Darwin himself made no contribution whatsoever to the Tradition. If anything, in fact, Darwin’s “contribution” was of a negative nature—in that his concept of “natural selection”

⁷⁰ See, e.g., Frank E. Manuel, editor, *Utopias and Utopian Thought*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1965.

⁷¹ Actually, it would not be an end but, rather, a *means* to the end—of well-being, a lack of neediness.

⁷² See, e.g., Jonathan Beecher, *Charles Fourier: The Visionary and His World*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1986.

⁷³ Ripon, Wisconsin (where my sister and her husband live, and which claims the honor of being the birthplace of the Republican Party) began as a Fourier “phalanx” named Ceresco.

⁷⁴ A key concept associated with Fourier was that of “passions”—roughly what we would term “needs.” Besides the five senses, he identified four passions of the soul (friendship, love, ambition, and parenthood), and three “distributive” passions: *la Papillone* (a need for variety—e.g., in work), *la Cabaliste* (a need for controlled rivalry), and *la Composite* (a complex need, that included a need for females to have rights equal to males, acceptance of homosexuality, etc.).

was not only of dubious scientific value,⁷⁵ but provided a basis for the rise of the vicious “philosophy” of Social Darwinism.⁷⁶

The important concept that emerged as a by-product of evolutionary thinking was that of a “discrepancy.”⁷⁷ And the thinking associated with this concept is as follows:

Were we to study our species from the period of 15,000 years ago to about 10,000 years ago, we would discover that a co-development had occurred between humans as biological entities and their gatherer-hunter⁷⁸ way of life. I say “co-development” because on the one hand the way of life affected how human biology developed during this period. But as humans developed consciousness, there was the birth of religion,⁷⁹ and *that* development may have led indirectly to developments in technology. Both of those developments involved changes in way of life in that more people began a more settled mode of existence, groups grew in size, and social classes began to emerge (with members of the upper class exerting dominance⁸⁰ over others in the society).

As way of life was changing (with the Agricultural Revolution and after), human biology tended to remain unchanged—the reason that Barash has referred to the former as the “hare” and the latter as the “tortoise.” Put another way, after the Agricultural Revolution there grew an increasing “discrepancy” between the (a) way of life for which humans had become “designed” during the period from 15,000 years ago to 10,000 years ago, and the (b) way of life that they were actually living—a way of life that for most was one *imposed* on them. That is, the “fit” that

⁷⁵ As William Irvine put it delicately: “Darwin had not so much proved that natural selection *does* occur as that it *must* occur.” *Apes, Angels, and Victorians: Darwin, Huxley, and Evolution*. With new Introduction by Sir Julian Huxley. New York: Time Incorporated, 1963, p. 129. First published by McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 1955. Darwin did not derive his concept of “natural selection” from empirical observations but, rather, from the supposed “law” of excess births put forward by Rev. Thomas Malthus [1766 – 1834] in his *An Essay on the Principle of Population*, 1798.

⁷⁶ The classic work on this subject is Richard Hofstadter, *Social Darwinism in American Thought*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1955. First published in 1944 by the University of Pennsylvania Press. An effort at debunking Hofstadter was made by Robert C. Bannister, *Social Darwinism: Science and Myth in Anglo-American Thought*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1979.

⁷⁷ The term was introduced by sociobiologist David P. Barash, and discussed in his “The Conflict Between Culture and Biology in Human Affairs,” pp. 318 – 324 in *Sociobiology and Behavior*. New York: Elsevier, 1977. Later, Barash devoted a book to the subject: *The Hare and the Tortoise: Culture, Biology, and Human Nature*. New York: Penguin, 1988 (a book that I do not recommend, however).

⁷⁸ I use this formulation in preference to “hunter-gatherer” in deference to Richard E. Leakey, who observed that with the !Kung people of the Kalahari Desert in Africa gathering provided the bulk of the food. See his (with Roger Lewin) *People of the Lake: Mankind and Its Beginnings*. New York: Anchor Press/Doubleday, 1978.

⁷⁹ See Charles C. Mann, “The Birth of Religion,” in (pp. 34 – 59) *National Geographic*, Vol. 219, no. 6 (June 2011). The article focuses on the research of Klaus Schmidt.

⁸⁰ In part, this may have resulted from their imposing a certain belief system on other members of the society.

had existed prior to the Agricultural Revolution gradually weakened, that weakening becoming especially pronounced after the Industrial Revolution (which began about 1750 CE).

On the one hand, one likely could argue that virtually all—if not all—of humankind’s problems over the millennia have their ultimate origin in the Discrepancy. To my knowledge, no one has yet developed a detailed argument to this effect, but certainly my claim here has a high degree of plausibility.

On the other hand, though, one could argue that that this Discrepancy has had various *positive* implications as well—being the reason why:

- Various ancient religions—e.g., the Hebrew religion—developed an ethical component.
- Critiques of society have been developed and publicized.
- Research has been undertaken to understand why various human problems exist.
- Utopian thinking has arisen (including the brief utopias of the Bible).
- The planning and building “intentional” communities has occurred.⁸¹
- Reform efforts have been engaged in—some peaceful, others involving violence.
- An effort has been made to identify human “needs”—and “design specifications.”
- Etc.

Although I credit David P. Barash with *introducing* the term “discrepancy,” I credit Thorstein Veblen with *developing* the concept. Veblen failed, though, to develop a coherent narrative presenting his ideas relative to the concept. But as the concept *needs* further clarification, I conclude this chapter by presenting a Discrepancy argument, and support it with quotations from two of Veblen’s works, his “Christian Morals and the Competitive System” (1910),⁸² and *The Instinct of Workmanship and the State of the Industrial Arts* (1914),⁸³ and place them in an

⁸¹ For example, see Dolores Hayden, *Seven American Utopias: The Architecture of Communitarian Socialism, 1790 – 1975*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1976.

⁸² Published in the *International Journal of Ethics*, Vol. 20, no. 2 (January 1910), pp. 168 – 185. This article was reprinted in *Essays in Our Changing Order*, by Thorstein Veblen, edited by Leon Ardzrooni. New York: The Viking Press, 1954, pp. 200 – 218. First published in 1934. I am quoting from this volume.

⁸³ “After he had ceased writing [,] Veblen declared that *The Instinct of Workmanship* was his only important book.” Joseph Dorfman, *Thorstein Veblen and His America*. New York: The Viking Press, 1934, p. 324. I would say that *Instinct* was Veblen’s *most* important book, but not his *only* important book.

“argument” that I have developed. The wikipedia web site gives a great deal of valuable information about Thorstein Bunde Veblen and his writings, and I recommend it highly.⁸⁴

The first work (i.e., the article) will be referred to below as “CM,” the latter as “IW.” If a quotation does not appear under a given point, what this signifies is either that I have placed a relevant quotation(s) under some other point(s), or the point itself represents a “missing link” in Veblen’s reasoning that I am supplying for the sake of completeness.

1. Contemporary “savages” (the term used a century ago to refer to gatherer-hunter peoples) have been found to engage primarily in positive behaviors (e.g., working cooperatively with others in the group) and neutral activities (e.g., conversing and/or joking with others in the group).

“While this [“the principle of brotherly love, or the impulse to mutual service”] seems to be a characteristic trait of Christian morals and may serve as a specific mark by which to distinguish this morality from the greater non-Christian cults, it is apparently a trait which Christendom shares with many of the obscurer cultures, and which does not in any higher degree characterise Christendom than it does these other, lower cultures. In the lower, non-Christian cultures, particularly among the more peaceable communities of savages, something of the kind appears to prevail by mere force of hereditary propensity; at least it appears, in some degree, to belong to these lower civilisations without being traceable to special teaching or to a visible interposition of divine grace. And in an obscure and dubious fashion, perhaps sporadically, it recurs throughout the life of human society with such an air of ubiquity as would argue that it is an elemental trait of the species, rather than a cultural product of Christendom. It may not be an overstatement to say that this principle is, in its elements, in some sort an atavistic trait, and that Christendom comes by it through a cultural reversion to the animus of the lower (peaceable) savage culture.” [CM, pp. 204 – 205]

“the lower cultures, where the hereditary traits of the species should presumably assert themselves . . .” [CM, p. 206]

“The Christian principles inculcate brotherly love, mutual succor: Love thy neighbor as thyself; *Mutuum date, nihil inde sperantes*. This principle seems, in its elements at least, to be a culturally atavistic trait, belonging to the ancient, not to say primordial, peaceable culture of lower savagery.” [CM, p. 214 - 215]

“the golden rule of the peaceable savage has never lost the respect of occidental mankind, and its hold on men’s convictions is, perhaps, stronger now than at any earlier period of the modern time.” [CM, p. 215]

“Its [renunciation’s] companion principle, brotherly love or mutual service, appears, in its elements at least, to be a very deep rooted and ancient cultural trait, due to an extremely protracted experience of the race in the early stages of human culture, reinforced and defined by the social conditions prevalent in the early days of Christianity.” [CM, p. 216]

⁸⁴ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thorstein_Veblen.

“the impulsive bias of brotherly love . . .” [CM, p. 218]

2. We can infer from this fact that prior to the Agricultural Revolution—when only “savage” humans existed—similar behavior prevailed with the humans of the time.
3. Given that with the “savages” of the pre-Agricultural Revolution period we can assume that there had been co-development of humans as biological entities and their way of life (with associated behavior patterns), we can conclude that the behaviors these individuals engaged in expressed the “human nature” that had developed.
4. With the Agricultural Revolution new ways of life (with associated institutions) began to develop, and with them new behavior patterns (etc.).
5. However, human biology remained relatively unchanged over time. Because it was not changing, humans were now engaging in some behaviors contrary to their innate promptings (i.e., “human nature”).

“A surviving mutant type is necessarily suited more or less closely to the circumstances under which it emerged and first made good its survival, and it is presumably less suited to any other situation.” [IW, p. 16]

“Changes in the institutional structure are continually taking place in response to the altered discipline of life under changing cultural conditions, but human nature remains specifically the same.” [IW, p. 18]

“But there is no warrant for assuming that each or any of these successive changes in the scheme of institutions affords successively readier, surer or more facile ways and means for the instinctive proclivities to work out their ends, or that this sequence of change is more suitable to the untroubled functioning of these instincts than any phase that has gone before. Indeed, the presumption is the other way.” [IW, p. 19]

“the fitness of any given type of human nature for life after the manner and under the conditions imposed by any later phase in the growth of culture is a matter of less and less secure presumption the farther the sequence of institutional change has departed from that form of savagery which marked the initial stage in the life-history of the given racial stock.” [IW, p. 20]

“history records more frequent and more spectacular instances of the triumph of imbecile institutions over life and culture than of peoples who have by force of instinctive insight saved themselves alive out of a desperately precarious institutional situation . . .” [IW, p. 25]

“changes come rarely—in effect, not at all—in the endowment of instincts whereby mankind is enabled to employ these means [e.g., “technological ways and means”] and to live under the institutions which its habits of life have cumulatively created.” [IW, p. 35]

6. We moderns still have the same basic biology (including innate behavioral tendencies) as our “savage” ancestors did, but our ways of life (with associated institutions) encourage (if not cause) behavior patterns that are far more deviant than were those of, e.g., the early agriculturalists.

7. Because our modern way of life (with its particular institutions) virtually requires us to engage in behaviors that are contrary to ones that would be in accord with our biological nature, the resulting “discrepancy” has various negative consequences for us: it precipitates pathological behaviors (involving harm to others and/or oneself), physical illnesses (including ones of a psychosomatic nature), mental problems, etc.

“But such an animus as best comports with the logic of the machine process does not, it appears, for good or ill, best comport with the native strain of human nature in those peoples subject to its discipline. In all the various peoples of Christendom there is a visible straining against the drift of the machine’s teaching, rising at time and in given classes of the population to the pitch of revulsion.

“It is apparently among the moderately well-to-do, the half-idle classes, that such a revulsion chiefly has its way; leading now and again to fantastic, archaising cults and beliefs and to make-believe credence in occult insights and powers. At the same time, and with the like tincture of affectation and make-believe, there runs through much of the community a feeling of maladjustment and discomfort, that seeks a remedy in a ‘return to Nature’ in one way or another; some sort of return to ‘the simple life,’ which shall in some fashion afford an escape from the unending ‘grind’ of living from day to day by the machine method and shall so put behind us for a season the burdensome futilities by help of which alone life can be carried on under the routine of the machine process.” [IW, pp. 318 - 319]

“This growing recourse to vacations should be passably conclusive evidence to the effect that neither the manner of life enforced by the machine system, nor the occupations of those who are in close contact with this technology and its due habits of thought, can be ‘natural’ to the common run of civilised mankind.” [IW, p. 319]

“According to accepted theories of heredity, civilised mankind should by native endowment be best fit to live under conditions of a moderately advanced savagery, such as the machine technology will not permit. Neither in the physical conditions which it imposes, therefore, nor in the habitual ways of observation and reasoning which it requires in the work to be done, is the machine age adapted to the current native endowment of the race. And these various movements of unrest and revulsion are evidence, for as much as they are worth, that such is the case.

Not least convincing is the fact that a considerable proportion of those who are held unremittingly to the service of the machine process ‘break down,’ fall into premature decay. Physically and spiritually these modern peoples are better adapted to life under conditions radically different from those imposed by this modern technology.” [IW, p. 320]

“The limit of tolerance native to the race, physically and spiritually, is short of that unmitigated materialism and unremitting mechanical routine to which the machine technology incontinently drives.” [IW, p. 321]

“Laymen seek respite in the fog of occult and esoteric faiths and cults, and so fall back on the will to believe things of which the senses transmit no evidence; while the learned and studious are, by stress of the same ‘aching void,’ drawn into speculative tenets of ostensible

knowledge that purport to go nearer to the heart of reality, and that elude all mechanistic proof or disproof.” [IW, p. 331]

“Neither the manner of life imposed by the machine process, nor the manner of thought inculcated by habituation to its logic will fall in with the free movement of the human spirit, born, as it is, to fit the conditions of savage life. So there comes an irrepressible—in a sense, congenital—recrudescence of magic, occult science, telepathy, spiritualism, vitalism, pragmatism.” [IW, p. 334] [Other consequences??!]

8. Still, because humans continue to have the same basic biology that they had when “savagery” prevailed, from time to time (and especially within certain classes of people) behavior in accord with “human nature” occurs on a rather widespread scale.⁸⁵

[At the time of the origin of Christianity:] “The pride of caste and all the principles of differential dignity and honor fell away, and left mankind naked and unashamed and free to follow the promptings of hereditary savage human nature [,] which make for fellowship and Christian charity. Barring repressive conventionalities, reversion to the spiritual state of savagery is always easy; for human nature is still substantially savage. The discipline of savage life, selective and adaptive, has been by far the most protracted and probably the most exacting of any phase of culture in all the life-history of the race; so that by heredity human nature still is, and must indefinitely continue to be, savage human nature. This savage spiritual heritage that ‘springs eternal’ when the pressure of conventionality is removed or relieved, seems highly conducive to the two main traits of Christian morality, though more so to the principle of brotherly love than to that of renunciation [or “humility,” “abnegation”].” [CM, p. 209]

[Although the brotherly love principle that operated with the early Christians has lost much of its force, “being currently represented by a thrifty charity, and, perhaps, by the negative principle of fair play, neither of which can fairly be rated as a competent expression of the Christian spirit.”] “Yet this principle is forever reasserting itself in economic matters, in the impulsive approval of whatever conduct is serviceable to the common good and in the disapproval of disserviceable conduct even within the limits of legality and natural right.” [CM, p. 216]

[The historical development of a period, prior to the Industrial Revolution, during which “handicraft and petty trade” were the dominant features of the economy involved, one might argue] “a qualified or mitigated (sophisticated) return to the spirit of savagery, or at least as a

⁸⁵ Twice in “Christian Morals . . .” (on p. 217) Veblen used the term “mutual aid,” suggesting that he was familiar with Prince Peter Kropotkin’s book with that title (published in 1902, but based on a series of articles published several years earlier in *The Nineteenth Century*, an important periodical of the time). (Kropotkin had written the articles to respond to an earlier article in the same periodical by Thomas H. Huxley.) Veblen may also have been familiar with other of Kropotkin’s works, such as *Ethics: Origin and Development* (1924)—for, after all, Veblen was a well-read man. Insofar as Veblen was familiar with Kropotkin’s works, he would have learned of “mutual aid” behavior in both the animal and human realms—some of Kropotkin’s knowledge on the matter resulting from his own research in Siberia. (Veblen also used “mutual service” twice—pp. 204 and 216—and “mutual succor” twice—pp. 208 and 215—in “Christian Morals . . .”).

spiritual reversion looking in that direction, though by no means abruptly reaching the savage plane.” [IW, p. 204]

“That the eighteenth-century system of Natural Rights allows . . . a degree of approximation to the scheme of rights and obligations observed among many primitive peoples need flutter no one’s sense of cultural consistency. Return to Nature was more or less of a password in the closing period of the era of handicraft and after, and in respect of this system of civil relations it appears that the popular attitude of that time was in effect something of a reversion to primitive habits of thought; though it was at best a partial return to a ‘state of nature,’ in the sense of a state of peace and industry rather than a return to the unsophisticated beginnings of society.” [IW, p. 297]

“It is not that the era of handicraft was an era of reversion to savagery, but only that the tone-giving factor in the community of that time reverted, by force of the state of the industrial arts, to habits of peace and industry, in which direct and detailed manual work takes a leading place.” [IW, pp. 297 - 298]

9. There is therefore hope that such behavior can come to the fore again, on a widespread scale, if the circumstances are right.

“Except for a possible reversion to a cultural situation strongly characterised by ideals of emulation and status, the ancient racial bias embodied in the Christian principle of brotherhood should logically continue to gain ground at the expense of the pecuniary morals of competitive business.” [CM, p. 218]

10. What are those “circumstances”?

The right institutional situation (among other factors), I would argue, based on my general reading of Veblen. Veblen, though, was silent on this matter. However, the fact that he perceived the “savage” way of life as “natural” and regarded that way of life as normative means that he would have been supportive of institutions that permitted, and even conducted, behaviors characteristic of “savagery.”

Chapter 3. Design Specifications: Varied Views

Historically, the Tradition has been about *human well-being*. The scope of the Tradition has, however, been broadened in recent years, and of particular importance has been its expansion to include a concern for the threat to *human existence* posed by global warming. Given that human well-being is now being thought of in terms of the “discrepancy” and “human design specifications,” this chapter presents varied views on the *nature* of such specifications, with Chapter 4 then presenting *my* views on the matter. If people are to have a high level of well-being, they must have a way of life that accords with their “design specifications” as humans, but no consensus exists as to what those specifications are; that’s why I present varied views on the subject in this chapter, and my views regarding the matter in the following chapter. And if people are to survive global warming, they must (among other things) have some knowledge about *that* phenomenon, and I use Chapter 5 to present some information on the matter.

If, as I suggested in Chapter 2, all of our problems as humans are rooted in the fact of the Discrepancy, it follows that widespread well-being can exist only if societal system change occurs—in the direction of providing a way of life that accords with design specifications. Therefore, in Chapter 6 I provide a “picture” of what such a society might look like, and provide (in Chapter 7) a scenario of how, step by step, it might be achieved. In addition, I describe that society as one whose residents engage in both mitigation and adaptational efforts, so far as global warming is concerned—so that well-being needs and the need for survival are addressed simultaneously.

A unique feature of my recommendations here is that I propose a certain institution as a vehicle for developing, and acting upon, ideas to bring about societal system change. This institution—the Structured Interaction Group (SIG)—is described in Chapter 8. Finally, given that in the Preface I stated that the churches could be playing an important role in bringing about societal system change, I use Chapter 9 to present my ideas on that subject.

Several years ago Philip Slater stated that “there is no particular reason why the United States could not become the center of the most beautiful, benign, and exciting culture the world has ever known.”⁸⁶ Implicit in this statement was recognition that the United States, at that time (1970), was nowhere near its potential, but that there was hope that it *could* be. Slater seemingly sensed that the reason for this deficiency was a lack of “fit” between our way of life and our “design specifications,” but made no reference to the latter concept—nor did Slater offer any solution to the problem he identified.

My goal in this book is not only to offer a discussion of human “design specifications” (presenting varied views on the subject), but offer some recommendations as to how we might obtain a way of life that not only accords to our design specifications, but enables at least some

⁸⁶ Philip E. Slater, *The Pursuit of Loneliness: American Culture at the Breaking Point*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1970, p. 144. Dr. Slater has a web site: <http://www.philipslater.com/>.

of us to adapt to the changing conditions that will increasingly result from continued global warming.

In this chapter I discuss the views, relative to design specifications, of several thinkers, and then in Chapter 4 present my own views on the subject. First, though, some introductory comments—by way of a summary of a remarkable old book by George B. Leonard, his *The Transformation: A Guide to the Inevitable Changes in Humankind*.⁸⁷

Introduction: George B. Leonard's The Transformation

Leonard made a number of striking statements in this book, such as:

- “Actually, there is nothing essentially human or natural in our present situation.” (p. 11)
- “I consider how often the moments of bliss in my life have been associated with rhythmic activities—dancing, running down a long mountain trail, playing drums, paddling a canoe for hours—an affirmation, perhaps, of the essentially rhythmic nature of the universe.” (p. 16)
- “Only humanity under the conditions of Civilization has dared try to step outside the pulsing flow of nature.”⁸⁸ (p. 18)
- “It has been consumers and components, unaware and out of tune with nature,” that our culture has for the most part needed and produced.” (p. 24)
- “A space capsule is not a very good escape vehicle. We cannot escape ourselves.” (p. 29)
- “. . . every American knows (he is repeatedly reminded, in countless subtle ways) of his inalienable right, not to be happy, but to be unhappy in style.” (p. 34)
\\
- “. . . it is doubtful that anyone, including ourselves, can long tolerate the peculiarly deprived consciousness that prevails over most of this nation. Suffice it to say that the life of the [“primitive” African] Bushman . . . clearly contains more power and intensity, more laughter, more music, more challenge, more joy than does that of a typical American.” (p. 35)
- “In terms of how it feels to be alive, we have a very low standard of living indeed.” (p. 35)

⁸⁷ New York: Dell Publishing Company, Inc., 1972. Leonard died on my birthday last year:
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George_Leonard.

⁸⁸ I feel compelled to note here that spending several hours on a golf course does not constitute getting close to Nature—for one’s mind is on the game, not the surround. Besides, the well-tended grassy surround isn’t even natural!

- “The repeated use of ‘why?’ with young children constitutes one of our most effective ways of insuring that they *not* endow objects with vital force. . . . there are no real ‘whys’ in nature, and all the ‘hows’ are strictly provisional.” (p. 41)
- “Perhaps the basic, unacknowledged purpose of every zoo is to distort our children’s perceptions, to show them that living things can be ripped from their biofields and held, still “alive,” prepared for what Civilization, through a more complex series of manipulations, is going to do to them. It is interesting to note that zoos are prominently featured in those societies that mask their almost paranoid anxieties behind powerful machines of war—the Aztecs, the Assyrians, the Romans, the modern megastates.” (p. 165)
- “[Our] ponderous and complex material culture is actually a millstone around the ordinary citizen’s neck.” (p. 51)
- “Higher technology . . . seems to go along with social stratification—the proliferation of classes and castes and the decline of a sense of single community.” (p. 56)
- “Religion, ever more priestly and separate from daily living, validates caste and class, and sanctions formal codified punishment as a means of social control.” (p. 60)
- “All religions that promise specific, significant rewards in an afterlife are agricultural adaptations.” (p. 63)
- “. . . we know that, in order to achieve success, every child of Civilization must have at least one physical or mental deformity, one Gift from the culture.” (p. 69)
- Etc., etc.

Much in the book lends itself to commentary, but I will here focus on just one of the topics that he discussed. In his Chapter 5 (“The Gift”) he noted that neuroses, diseases, and just plain discontents are associated with Civilization, and that rather than discussing the causes and consequences associated with each separately, he would lump them all together and give them the name NDDs. He then offered (pp. 71 – 72) a series of theses regarding NDDs:

- “Civilization’s most indispensable nonmaterial endowment to its children is some type of neurosis/disease/discontent.”
- “The best way of gaining temporary relief from dis-ease lies in forgetfulness of existence. This is generally achieved either by drugs or by the relentless getting and building that has characterized much of human life since the success of agriculture [10,000 years ago].”

- Individuals need to be “afflicted with dis-ease in order for Civilization’s work to be done.” Despite what Sigmund Freud taught, the “NDDs do not necessarily result . . . from a conflict between humankind’s sexual and aggressive *instincts* and the realities of social life.” Rather, Civilization *per se* is the culprit.
- “An NDD is more effective the more its origin is veiled. When one mode of programming dis-ease is widely revealed in a particular society, that mode loses much of its power.”
- “Up to a certain remarkably high breaking point, the NDDs are not maladaptive for the civilized individual but highly adaptive. A pre-ulcerous condition makes for success in this society; ulcers are a bit too much.”
- Every NDD is of both a physical and psychological nature. . . every NDD leaves some physical scar. To that extent we are all maimed and we are maiming our children.”
- “The NDDs are essentially incurable in any civilized society and perhaps in any society that has advanced as far as agriculture. Symptoms may shift and particular forms of disease may be exchanged for others. The basic condition remains [, however]. Transformation of society is the only real cure.”

Note this last statement: “Transformation of society is the only real cure;” it is a statement with which I concur—and offer suggestions regarding in this book.

Leonard’s argument, in brief, seemed to be:

- World history since the “fall” into agriculture,⁸⁹ rather than being a story of continual, even accelerating, *progress*, has been one of continual, even accelerating, *regress*.
- In arguing (p. 3) that “most of our current troubles . . . can be traced ultimately to the lack of a vivid unifying principle or belief system [“vision”],” Leonard seemed to state that what initiated this process of regress was the loss of a “vivid unifying principle or belief system . . .”
- Leonard’s reference (p. 235) to “these fading days of Civilization” suggests that he believed that the period of regress was coming to an end, to be followed by some sort of Golden Age.
- On p. 3 Leonard asserted that “the Transformation [of our society], despite surface similarities, is neither utopian nor millenarian, . . . it is not only possible but inevitable, . . . it is, most significantly already, well under way, . . . it proceeds out of historical

⁸⁹ “The Biblical legend of the expulsion from the Garden of Eden seems clearly to describe the invention of agriculture.” Warren Johnson, *Muddling Toward Frugality*. Boulder, CO: Shambhala, 1979, p. 43.

necessity, amenable to validation both by intuition and by reason.” On p. 236 he repeated his claim: “I know that the Transformation is possible because it is already so well under way.”

I agree with parts of Leonard’s argument, but disagree with other parts:

- I agree that world history since the Agricultural Revolution has been, in important respects, a story of regress—the criterion that I am using here being the “general welfare.”
- Whereas Leonard seemed to think of the cause of this regress as being the loss of a “vivid unifying principle or belief system,” my explanation is The Discrepancy (discussed briefly above). As one reads in the book, one may “read” my explanation into the book (i.e., one may *infer* such an explanation from the contents of the book); however, Leonard’s *explicit* (apparent) explanation does not agree with such an inference.
- I assume that this Discrepancy was not chosen. Humans made certain choices, true, but could not foresee all of the ramifications of their choices—could not anticipate that a Discrepancy would arise and grow in magnitude. But it did; and—following the “one thing leads to another” principle—once a process of societal-cultural change got underway, it gained the appearance of being a “natural” process. And, in fact, was labeled “progress”—and embraced by most.⁹⁰
- Although Leonard ostensibly perceived a “fading away” of Civilization, and the dawn of a glorious future, he failed to present an explanation for that turnaround. I, in contrast, see no reason to believe in such a turnaround; what appears to be more likely is James Lovelock’s⁹¹ prediction that by the end of this century few, if any, humans will be alive!
- Perhaps in 1972 (when Leonard’s book was published) there seemed to be evidence of a change in “consciousness,” so that it was then reasonable to project the expansion of that “consciousness” throughout the civilized world. But if a change in consciousness *was* detectable at that time, *I* would interpret this not as an independent development with great (and positive) causal potential but, rather, as just another effect of a growing Discrepancy!
- A belief that positive change began to occur around 1972 seems terribly naïve today.
- I agree with Leonard that the “cure” for our problems is societal system change (rather than electing a new president, developing a new curriculum for the schools, etc.), but do

⁹⁰ After all, one has little choice on this matter—for heroic efforts are needed to “buck” the ways of the society that one was born and raised in.

⁹¹ Lovelock is most noted for being the originator of the “Gaia” hypothesis.

not believe that it will “just happen”—or happen in the way that Leonard apparently thought.

- Rather, I believe that societal system change will occur only as the result of (1) the development of plans, (2) plans *capable* of implementation, and (3) the actual implementation of those plans.
- I agree with Leonard’s statement (p. 3) that “the biblical dictum that where there is no vision the people perish is by no means merely metaphorical.” But where “vision” needs to enter the picture (I’m convinced) is in developing plans for societal system change. For if plans are developed that are easily understood and that capture people’s imaginations, the enthusiasm generated by the plans can result in people becoming actively—and energetically—involved in implementing the plans.
- Plans that are developed *must* have an orientation to bringing genuine *well-being* to as many as possible, while simultaneously ensuring ways of life that are *sustainable*. The focus of this paper, however, is “only” on the first subject.

In the next series of sections, I summarize (or at least list, in some cases) ideas that a number of writers have published relative to human “design specifications” and then conclude the discussion (in Chapter 4) by presenting my own (tentative) thoughts on the matter. I begin with a book by Gordon Rattray Taylor [1911 – 1981], *Rethink: A Paraprimitive Solution*.⁹² As the title of this book suggests, its contents bear a fairly strong resemblance to those of Leonard’s book—and the book was also published in 1972.

Taylor’s “Rethinking”

Taylor begins by noting that (p. 7) in the “developed” countries, at least, “the suspicion seems to be crystallizing that somewhere down the line we took a wrong turning.” And that although most of those having this “suspicion” likely do not realize it, there is good reason to conclude (p 8) that “the future cannot be, must not be, simply an extension of the past: a radical rethinking of the whole system is needed.” Taylor noted (p. 17) that the “primitive” societies that have been studied by anthropologists in general do not exhibit the signs of stress (e.g., alcoholism, suicide), common in “advanced” societies, which fact suggests strongly that “such stresses are the product of an unsuitable way of life.” That is, if one becomes an alcoholic, this is not the result of a weak personality, poor choices, etc. but, rather is attributable to the *nature of the society* that one lives in. Given this conclusion, Taylor looked to “primitive” societies to see what can be learned from them that would be applicable to modern “advanced” societies. Taylor realized that it would not be either possible or desirable to “go back” to the sort of sustenance system of the “primitives” (i.e., a gatherer-hunter way of life). Yet he observed (p. 13) that the technological developments that have occurred in the “advanced” societies have been a mixed blessing: they

⁹² New York: E. P. Dutton & Company, Inc., 1972.

have made life *easier* but have not necessarily made life *better*. In fact, Taylor baldly declared (p. 19) that “we live in a psychological slum.”

Taylor noted (p. 10) that “material advance” has been a primary characteristic of the “developed” countries, but that this has not been accompanied by an increase in people’s level of satisfaction. And he asked: Do we need to reconstruct society to achieve this end? His answer, of course, is that we do; and he establishes as the primary goal (p. 15) improving mental health: “we must think in terms of improving mental health, creating sound basic personalities and the matching of social institutions to them.” That is, our goal should be especially to have a society within which all members have “sound basic personalities,” and to achieve that goal we must establish institutions that will conduce the emergence of such personalities. If we allow technological development to continue to occur without any thought as to its impact on how institutions, and thus basic personalities, are affected, we will simply intensify our problems—make our societies even worse psychological slums than they already are.

Taylor contended (p. 12) that there are three ways of living:

- Service to others.
- The manipulation of materials.
- Having an intellectual life.

And he evidently perceived these three ways of living as mutually exclusive. Regarding these three “ways” Taylor argued that a problem arises “when a society offers a range of choices which differs from the range which its members demand” I assume that what he meant here is that there are several “natural” *personality types*, and that it is important for a society to recognize this, and ensure that the society is structured in such a way that all of these types can readily find expression (a point emphasized by Charles Fourier). And Taylor added (p. 22) that a society must offer a range of *challenges* to its members, and even (p. 57) satisfy a need to have some mystery in life. One might argue, Taylor notes (p. 89), that the psychological needs that people have can be satisfied during leisure time if they are not satisfied during one’s “work” time. But Taylor insisted that the answer, rather, lies in striving for the sort of wholeness that characterizes (and presumably *has* characterized) the lives of “primitive” peoples.

This conclusion led Taylor to offer a list (p. 149) of the characteristics of a society “fit” for human habitation:

- The rate of social change would be small.
- Members of the society would live in communities.
- The society would have an improved political system.
- Members of the society would live in the country.

- A consumer mentality would be rejected by the members of the society.
- Bureaucracy would be simplified in the society.
- “Busyness” would not be valued.
- Reflection, however, *would* be valued.

At a slightly later point (p. 153) Taylor noted that “A sensible person would choose to live in a society whose other members were also sensible.” And then adds that “it is precisely the creation of a sensible populace which constitutes the problem.” Yes, indeed!

I find it difficult to disagree with the eight points listed by Taylor—nine, if “sensible people” is added. However, *how* does one reduce the rate of social change? What is the *nature* of the communities that Taylor envisions? What would an “improved political system” look like? Is the goal of living in the country consistent with the goal of living in communities? How does one eliminate a consumer mentality from the society? How does one accomplish simplification of bureaucracy? How does one get people to become less busy, and more reflective? How does one get a society of sensible people?

Given all of the questions that Taylor’s list causes one to ask, one might feel it necessary to conclude that Taylor himself was not a very sensible person! For one is forced to ask of his list: Of what value is it to develop a list of goals worth achieving if one does not also provide some worthwhile ideas regarding *how* those goals might be achieved?! I suppose that lists such as those provided by Taylor are of some value in that they can cause others to think of the goals that *they* would put forth which, in turn, might lead *them* to develop ideas regarding how their goals might be achieved. Still, it is not very satisfying to read a list of goals without also being given at least some ideas regarding how those goals might be realized. However, if a list such as the one that Taylor offered would be used as the basis for a group discussion, the list might prove to be of value precisely *because* of its lack of specificity! That’s my hope, at any rate.

Goldsmith’s “Blueprint”

Edward Goldsmith [1928 – 2009], founder (in 1969) of *The Ecologist*, devoted the entire January 2 issue (1972) to a long article entitled *A Blueprint for Survival*,⁹³ later that year published as a book.⁹⁴ In that book he advocated the creation of a stable society ecologically, but also made a few comments regarding human well-being. Let me begin my summary of his discussion of that topic by quoting a statement that he made at the end of the book: “. . . if we are capable of

⁹³ Available online at: <http://www.theecologist.info/key27.html>.

⁹⁴ He left this position in 1990, at the urging of Norwegian “deep ecologist” Arne Naess, to write the lengthy *The Way: An Ecological Worldview*, published in 1992. An updated version of *The Way* was published by the University of Georgia Press in 2008.

ensuring a relatively smooth transition to it [i.e., a stable society], we can be optimistic about providing our children with a way of life psychologically, intellectually and aesthetically more satisfying than the present one. And we can be confident that it will be sustainable as ours cannot be, so that the legacy of despair we are about to leave them may at the last minute be changed to hope.”⁹⁵

In “The Goal” portion of the book (the final of four) Goldsmith made these comments that pertain to human well-being:

- “A society made up of decentralized, self-sufficient communities, in which people work near their homes, have the responsibility of governing themselves, of running their schools, hospital, and welfare services, in fact of constituting real communities, should, we feel, be a much happier place.” (Sect. 312) This indicates that Goldsmith put a premium on subjective feelings of well-being, and was convinced that having an ability to play a major role in decision-making that affected them was a vital factor underlying such a feeling.
- Goldsmith added that if people lived “in these conditions, [they] would be likely to develop an identity of their own, which many of us have lost in the mass society we live in. They would tend, once more [⁹⁶], to find an aim in life, develop a set of values, and take pride in their achievements as well as in those of their community.” (Sect. 313) Here Goldsmith’s emphasis was psychological and ethical.

I should add that when I read this passage, the *Cheers* television program theme song came to my mind “Where Everybody Knows Your Name,” by Gary Portnoy and Judy Hart Angelo), three verses of which are:

Making your way in the world today
Takes everything you’ve got;
Taking a break from all your worries
Sure would help a lot.
Wouldn’t you like to get away?

All those nights when you’ve got no lights
The check is in the mail;
And your little angel
Hung the cat up by its tail;
And your third fiancée didn’t show.

Sometimes you want to go

⁹⁵ I am quoting from the online version, section 354. Given that the book (presented in four sections, plus appendices) is organized into a series of short numbered sections, it will be convenient to refer to those sections numbers rather than page numbers.

⁹⁶ Goldsmith’s “once more” here seems to be an allusion to the fact that prior to the Agricultural Revolution all humans (and their ancestors) were “hunter-gatherers” (Sect. 238). As such, they had a high standard of living—if not in a material sense, in senses that are much more important.

Where everybody knows your name,
And they're always glad you came;
You want to be where you can see,
Our troubles are all the same;
You want to be where everybody knows your name.

In the next section I discuss a book by Jean Liedloff that recounts her experiences with the Yequana Natives of Venezuela. What I find ironic here is that in effect the characters in this once-popular television program were trying to emulate the Yequana—but had no idea that they were; and that the song's composer likely also (I would guess) had no idea that he was writing as *if he* were a Yequana! *Cheers*, of course, was set in the “Cheers” bar in Boston (which I had occasion to visit a few years ago, as my older daughter was a student at Boston University at the time), and I feel it necessary to “ask”: Isn’t it a pathetic commentary on our society that to have some semblance of a “natural” life—for a time at least—one must go to a bar?! Not that *all* bars will “do the trick,” of course; but it almost seems that *only* bars will! (Which is not to say that I am a frequenter of bars—for I most decidedly am not!)

- Goldsmith’s interest in having psychological needs met was made explicit in Sect. 314, in which he asserted that the absence of “these things” (identified in the previous point) is what results in “rendering our mass society ever less tolerable to us and in particular to our youth and to which can be attributed the present rise in drug-addiction, alcoholism and delinquency, all of which are symptomatic of a social disease in which a society fails to furnish its members with their basic psychological requirements.”
- In Sect. 315 Goldsmith presented a long quotation from John Stuart Mill’s [1806 – 1873] *Principles of Political Economy*, Vol. II (1857), one statement of which is that “Nor is there much satisfaction in contemplating a world with nothing left to the spontaneous activity of nature” This suggests a conviction, on Goldsmith’s part, that because we humans developed “*in* Nature,” we evolved with a need for close *contact* with Nature. In Sect. 123 Goldsmith noted that “Industrial man in the world today is like a bull in a china shop, with the single difference that a bull with half the information about the properties of china as we have about those of ecosystems would probably try and [*sic:* to] adapt its behaviour to its environment rather than the reverse.” Implicit here is the conviction that if we are to live in a harmonious manner with Nature, it is not enough to collect ever more scientific knowledge about Nature. Doing that has great importance, to be sure, but equally (perhaps more) important is to *experience* Nature. For doing so can not only help one gain *knowledge* about Nature, but help one gain a sense of *oneness* and *respect-reverence* for Nature—which feelings will make one reluctant to despoil Nature in any manner.

Although both Edward Goldsmith and (especially) Gordon Rattray Taylor wrote admiringly about “primitive” peoples, their knowledge of such people was based on what they had read (by,

e.g., anthropologists). Jean Liedloff, in contrast, wrote her *The Continuum Concept*⁹⁷ on the basis of her *personal* experience with “primitives” in South America.

Liedloff’s “Continuum”

While in Florence, Italy, on her first trip to Europe (from New York City) Liedloff⁹⁸ met, and became acquainted with, two Italian explorers (p. 3), and was invited by them to accompany them on a diamond-hunting expedition to the Caroni River (a tributary of the Orinoco River) in Venezuela. She accepted the invitation (but does not comment on *why* she did so in her book⁹⁹).

The group then traveled to Venezuela (which means “little Venice,” after the Italian city with that name), and proceeded (p. 6) up the Orinoco, and then the Caroni and, finally, the Carupi River (a tributary of the Caroni). While on the expedition she encountered Tauripan Natives; and although on this trip made no effort to study these Natives, she was struck by the fact that (p. 8) they were all evidently happy and (p. 9): “The children were uniformly well-behaved: never fought, were never punished, always obeyed happily and instantly; the deprecation ‘Boys will be boys’ did not apply to them; but I never asked myself why.” These observations made her curious about the Natives she encountered, but as the purpose of the expedition was other than to observe Natives, she lacked motivation to satisfy her curiosity.

Later (she did not specify *how much* later—or even when the initial expedition occurred), she went on a second expedition (pp. 12 – 13) this time led by another Italian, the destination being the upper Caura River basin near the Brazilian border. Not only did she not indicate when this second expedition occurred, she did not even comment on its purpose. Evidently she believed that such details were not important for her story, for she only wrote about her contact with members of the Yequana and Sanema tribes.

Her comments about those Nativess suggest that the purpose of the expedition was to learn about “natives” in Venezuela, for she made a number of comments (pp. 13 – 16) about the Natives she observed on this trip:

- All of the men, women, and children had strong personalities—each was an individual in his/her own right. Meaning that no pressures for conformity existed with these Natives.
- The people seemed unreal to her because of the “absence of unhappiness, a large factor in every society familiar to me.” “The ‘rules’ of human behavior did not [seem to] apply to them.”

⁹⁷ New York: Da Capo Press (a member of the Perseus Books Group). 1977 (revised edition). First published in 1975.

⁹⁸ A picture of her is online at <http://www.continuum-concept.org/>. Given that Liedloff died recently, it’s not clear whether her web site will be continued.

⁹⁹ Was it, e.g., out of a sense of boredom—a sense that she needed some adventure so that she could feel alive? We don’t learn from the book what was going through her mind.

- There didn't seem to be any word for "work" in the Yequana vocabulary. This is not to say that they failed to engage in sustenance activities—for obviously they did: their survival depended on it. But when they engaged in activities necessary for their continued survival, they did so as members of a group, and in doing so engaged in gossiping and joking while "working." Indeed, "a party mood prevailed." That is, they had learned to do the "work" necessary for their continued survival in such a way that it was *enjoyable*; they got their "work" done, but the "work" itself was almost secondary to their other activities while "working." In a sense, the "work" they engaged in was simply an *excuse* for being, and interacting, with other members of their tribe, which interaction they *made* enjoyable for themselves. They had *learned* to interact one with another in a manner that all parties involved found enjoyable, and by combining this mode of interaction with those activities necessary to their survival they had "hit" upon a mode of living that (1) made them all happy, (2) resulted in their necessary "work" getting done, and (3) helped give cohesiveness to their group. Given this, is it any wonder that (p. 15) "They . . . had no motive to progress [¹⁰⁰], as they felt no need, no pressure from any quarter, to change their ways."
- Liedloff could detect no tendencies for competition in their behavior—suggesting that cooperative behavior is what we humans are programmed for. (Note that one of Darwin's first important critics was Russian Prince Peter Kropotkin¹⁰¹ [1842 – 1921], who wrote a book—*Mutual Aid*¹⁰² (1902)—based in part on his research in Siberia; Kropotkin argued that, contrary to Darwin, cooperation was the "law of life." Were he alive today, I feel confident that he would find Liedloff's book not only highly important, but a joy to read.)

Liedloff's expeditions three and four (p. 18) were under her own leadership, and presumably had the purpose of studying the Yequana (specifically) more intensely—for she referred to her journals, and noted that they "reflect that the unlearning technique was becoming second nature to me . . .," but was having difficulty letting go of the notion that unhappiness was not a "legitimate . . . part of experience" When she returned to New York City after her fourth trip, she stated (p. 18) that by then she had developed "a point of view so stripped of presuppositions that the effect was like arriving after a long haul at zero." For a time (she did not

¹⁰⁰ I wish that Liedloff had not used the word "progress" here—or at least had put it in quotes. For how can one label any movement away from what these people had "achieved"—but certainly not as a result of conscious choice—as anything but *regress*?! We Westerners are so used to equating technological development as "progress" that we have difficulty being critical of such development. It's as if Gaia has been guiding our history since the Agricultural Revolution: Gaia realized, shortly after this "Revolution" got underway, that it had made a mistake in allowing humans to appear on the scene, and "fixed" historical development in such a way that humankind would unwittingly bring about its own destruction; and that via "global warming" would accomplish that "goal."

¹⁰¹ See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peter_Kropotkin.

¹⁰² The book is available at: http://dwardmac.pitzer.edu/Anarchist_Archives/kropotkin/mutaidcontents.html.

specify how long) she had a jumble of ideas in her head concerning the “primitives” that she had been observing, but after an editor of the *New York Times* asked her to elaborate on a statement that she had made earlier that was quoted in the *Times*, she “began to reverse the tearing-down process, and, bit by bit, to perceive the order that underlay not only my South American observations but also the naked fragments into which I had broken my experience of civilized life.” She admits that at this point she was “innocent of [any] theory,” but that “After about a year” she came to recognize “the evolutionary origins of human expectations and tendencies that began to explain the high state of well-being of my savage friends compared with the civilized.” Clearly her use of the word “savage” here should not be interpreted as indicating that Liedloff thought of the Yequana as her inferiors—for most certainly she did not!

Even after coming to see the Yequana in an evolutionary light, however, Liedloff did not feel that she was ready to write a book about her experiences. Thus, she made (p. 19) a fifth expedition “to see whether my observations, only rallied retrospectively into a body of evidence, might be usefully augmented by deliberate study.” She learned a few additional facts about the Yequana during the course of this trip, “But in the main, Expedition Five served to assure me that my interpretation of their behavior, constructed from my recollections of it, was supported by the reality. Indeed, the once-unaccountable actions of Indians of both tribes [Yequana and Sanema], viewed in the light of continuum principles, became not only understandable but often predictable.”

Liedloff’s Chapter 2 is entitled “The Continuum Concept” (pp. 21 – 28), but nowhere in that chapter did she clearly define “continuum concept.” On p. 25 she stated that “The human continuum can also be defined . . .,” which implies that “continuum concept” had been defined earlier in the chapter—but it wasn’t. Let us, however, attempt to infer the meaning she intended for “continuum concept” from what she wrote in Chapter 2.

She began by claiming that during our first 2 million years (p. 21) “man [¹⁰³] was a success. He had evolved from apehood to manhood as a hunter-gatherer [I prefer “gatherer-hunter,” following Richard Leakey] with an efficient life style [I prefer “way of life.”¹⁰⁴] which had it continued, might have seen him through many a million-year anniversary. As it is, most ecologists agree, his chances of surviving even another century are diminished with each day’s activities.”

“But,” she continued, “during the brief few thousand years since he strayed [with the Agricultural Revolution] from the way of life to which [processes of] evolution adapted him, he

¹⁰³ I am somewhat surprised by Liedloff’s use of sexist language in this passage, given that she is not a male (to the best of my knowledge).

¹⁰⁴ My view here is that a given society can be said to have a certain “way of life,” but that different individuals in the society may have different “lifestyles”—based on income, education, age, etc. That is, certain general characteristics will tend to prevail in any given society, but the *particularities* of how one lives will vary from person to person. In a sense, the “lifestyle” of each person is unique, but there are enough similarities between different individuals that it is possible to identify *types* of lifestyles.

has not only wreaked havoc upon the natural order of the entire planet, he has also managed to bring into disrepute the highly evolved good sense that guided his behavior throughout all those eons.” I agree that the Agricultural Revolution has proven to be a disaster for humankind, and also agree that humans had become adapted to a certain way of life (that included gathering and hunting—and fishing, snaring in some locales—as sustenance activities). However, I would add (using Liedloff herself as my source!) that child-rearing practices also had an impact on adult behavior, as well as habits developed while one was young, and growing up with other youngsters in a common environment.

Liedloff implied that the change in ways of living associated with the Agricultural Revolution was accompanied by a change in the role of the human brain in human affairs (p. 21): “Ever more frequently our innate sense of what is best for us is short-circuited by suspicion while the intellect, which has never known much about our real needs, decides what to do. It is not, for example, the province of the reasoning faculty to decide how a baby ought to be treated.” What she could have added at this point—but didn’t—was that prior to the Agricultural Revolution the human brain had acted as a *servant* to one’s total being, but that after that Revolution got underway, it began to assume the role of a *master* ever more. As Joost A. M. Meerloo has stated (p. vii in his Foreword to A. T. W. Simeons’s *Man’s Presumptuous Brain: An Evolutionary Interpretation of Psychomatic Disease*¹⁰⁵), “the brain of human animals in the pre-cultural period of evolution was well-adapted to its environment. It served adequately to master the dangers of the world. But man is born like a monkey foetus, naked and unprotected, with a freakish brain, an overgrown computer, far too advanced for its body. Such a presumptuous brain gradually leads to an overgrown censorship. Man, the helpless baby . . . begins at the dawn of culture to build a new artificial environment which makes many of his animal reflexes nearly obsolete.” That is, for whatever reason(s), with the onset of the Agricultural Revolution the brain began to “interfere” with the “instincts.” This not only led to a mismanagement of child care (Liedloff), but the onset of various psychosomatic disorders (Simeons).

Liedloff continued (p. 22): “We are now fairly brought to heel by the intellect; our inherent [¹⁰⁶] sense of what is good for us has been undermined to the point where we are barely aware of its working and cannot tell an original impulse from a distorted one.” The “conscious mind, by its [very] nature, can only consider one thing at a time, while [sic: whereas] the unconscious can make any number of observations, calculations, syntheses, and executions simultaneously and correctly. ‘Correct’ in this context is a tricky word. It implies that we all agree on what we want the results of our actions to be, when in fact our intellectual ideas of what we want vary from person to person. *What is meant here by ‘correct’ is that which is appropriate to the ancient continuum of our species inasmuch as it is suited to the tendencies and expectations which we have evolved.*”

¹⁰⁵ New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., Inc., 1961.

¹⁰⁶ It is easy to overemphasize the role of genetics here at the expense of epigenetics, learning, and the development of habits.

We find in this passage the first *discussion*¹⁰⁷ of “continuum” that occurs in the book, and it would appear from the discussion that precedes its mention here (on p. 22) that she means by “continuum” the absence of a Discrepancy¹⁰⁸—the existence of accordance, “fit,” between the way of life for which we became “designed” prior to the Agricultural Revolution and the ways of life that we humans have been forced to live ever since. Perhaps, however, it would be more accurate to say “way of life that we had” rather than “way of life for which we had become designed,” given that the behaviors that Liedloff observed with the Yequana likely could be attributed partly to genetics, partly to the nature of their child care, and partly to learning and the development of habits.

On p. 23 Liedloff asked (after her reference to “tendencies” and “expectations” on the previous page: “How do the forces that put him [i.e., humans] together know in advance what a human will need? The secret is experience. The chain of experience that prepares a human being for his time on earth begins with the adventures of the first single-celled unit of living matter. What it experienced in the way of temperature, the composition of its surroundings, available nourishment to fuel its activities, weather changes, and bumpings into other objects or members of its own species was passed on to its descendants.” This is a somewhat odd claim on her part, because in her prior discussion she seemed to suggest that evolution occurred by selection processes, and now she seemed to be saying that she believes in Lamarckian inheritance¹⁰⁹—i.e., the possibility that acquired traits can be transmitted to progeny. Perhaps she was here alluding to epigenetic research (such as has recently been undertaken by Swedish scientist Lars Olov Bygren¹¹⁰), but she made no reference to such research.

She next made (p. 24) a glib reference to “the stabilizing principle” without presenting any reasons for expecting a situation of non-change. In the case of humans prior to the “Fall” (into agriculture) I have noted (earlier in my discussion of Liedloff) that our ancestors (if the Yequana can be taken as a modern example) had a way of life that they found so satisfying that they would have had no desire to introduce changes in it. That doesn’t mean that they could not have made certain decisions whose consequences would have brought change to that way of life—change that appeared to be of a positive nature, but turned out otherwise (the Agricultural Revolution!)—but such decisions were either absent or of a negligible nature until 10,000 years ago. Liedloff, however, offered no explanation for the “stabilizing principle” that she posits.

She continued (p. 24): The “design” that emerged for our species “*was a reflection of the experience it expected to encounter*. The experience it could tolerate was defined by the circumstances to which its antecedents had adapted.” I dislike her use of the word

¹⁰⁷ The word is first mentioned on p. 20.

¹⁰⁸ See Chapter 2 above.

¹⁰⁹ See <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lamarckism>.

¹¹⁰ See <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,1952313,00.html>.

“expectations” here because it suggests conscious awareness—although I’m sure that it was not her intention to suggest that. I assume that what she meant in using the word “expectations” is that the human develops—for whatever reasons—with certain needs and certain behavioral tendencies, and that if those needs are not met and those behavioral tendencies are denied expression, only negative results will be forthcoming—both for the individual involved, and for others with whom s/he comes in contact.¹¹¹

We finally encounter a definition of sorts of “continuum concept” on p. 25: “The human continuum can . . . be defined as the sequence of experience which corresponds to the expectations and tendencies of the human species in an environment consistent with that in which those expectations and tendencies were formed.” I’m not sure what she was trying to say here, but appears to have been saying that our needs and behavioral tendencies are not a “given” at birth, so that they remain unchanged over the course of our lives, but, rather, change as we age. If that’s what she meant, why didn’t she just *say it*!?

I have devoted a considerable amount of attention to the first few pages of Liedloff’s book, because I thought it necessary for providing a background to her “real” message. In her lengthy Chapter 3 (“The Beginning of Life,” pp. 29 – 75) she noted (p. 36) that: “For millions of years newborn babies have been held close to their mothers¹¹² from the moment of birth.” She argued that (p. 37): “The state of consciousness of an infant changes enormously during [this early] . . . in-arms^[113] phase.” “Step by step, as his central nervous system develops, he becomes more particularly *Homo sapiens* [i.e., s/he *realizes* his/her potential as a human being].” “What he feels before he can think is a powerful determinant of what kind of things he thinks when thought becomes possible.” I am in full agreement that the sort of care that a child receives will likely have a decisive influence on the sort of person s/he becomes. But would add that the *social environment* one finds oneself in as a youth can also be a significant factor; and I agree with Trigánt Burrow¹¹⁴ that even one’s “experience” while in the womb can have importance.

Liedloff noted (p. 39) that: “Man, more adaptive still [than a wooley monkey] to his own experience, can cope with variations in his surroundings that would extinguish a less ingenious species.” I agree, but would add that our superior ability to adapt has negative as well as positive consequences. For example (and I believe that Liedloff would agree with this point), since the

¹¹¹ In the modern world such “others” can live at a great distance away! As Brook Larmer points out in his *National Geographic* article “The Big Melt” (<http://ngm.nationalgeographic.com/2010/04/tibetan-plateau/larmer-text/2>), the glaciers in the “high heart of Asia, which supply meltwater to the great rivers in that part of the world, are disappearing—which fact is likely to be disastrous to the 2 billion people who depend on that water. Who is responsible for this melting? Western countries such as the United States, of course!

¹¹² My recollection of the 1975 (original) edition of Liedloff’s book—which I read about 30 years ago—is that she placed far more significance in early child care than she did in the 1977 edition. I haven’t gone back to check the 1975 edition, so I may be wrong on this point.

¹¹³ Ashley Montagu’s *Touching: The Human Significance of Skin* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1986, third edition) develops—but rather poorly, in my opinion—this subject.

¹¹⁴ See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Trigant_Burrow.

Agricultural Revolution we humans have developed ways of life that have been progressive in the sense of progressively Discrepant! Most of us have become somewhat adapted to (or at least *resigned* to) our Discrepant way of life, although some of us have “adapted” by acquiring heart problems, lung cancer, diabetes; some have “adapted” by becoming drug addicts or alcoholics; some have “adapted” by turning to crime; some have adapted without acquiring (or becoming) any of the above, but dislike the fact that we *must* adapt for the sake of survival; etc.

In a conclusion of sorts to her discussion (that occurs, however, in the middle of the chapter, on p. 43!), she stated: “The conscious mind is not what it seems to itself to be, nor does it have access to the programming secrets of the continuum it is evolved to serve. *To make of the intellect a competent servant instead of an incompetent master must be a major goal of a continuum philosophy.*” I would add to this declaration only that what we need today is not just an understanding of the Discrepancy concept, and the problems that it is causing for us, but ideas on “whither we should tend” and how to get there. I have already addressed the first of these topics earlier in this chapter, and shortly will list Liedloff’s contribution.

Before proceeding to Liedloff’s list, however, I would like to note that on pp. 49 – 56 she presented a detailed discussion of child-rearing practices of the Yequana, followed by a discussion of the contrasting infant experiences of Western-raised children. What that presentation suggests is that Liedloff believes that the primary need we “advanced” peoples have is a need to revolutionize our child care methods. I concur with this view, but would add that our society, as currently constituted, requires its members to be “maimed” (as George Leonard, quoted earlier, put it); and that it is also true that in our society (as Thorstein Veblen noted over a century ago): “All classes are in a measure engaged in the pecuniary struggle, and in all classes the possession of the pecuniary traits counts towards the success and [indeed very] survival of the individual.”¹¹⁵ The point is, then, that rather than encouraging people to adopt the child-rearing practices that Liedloff advocates, with the expectation that societal system change will eventually follow, we must build, within the Larger Society, a New Society that has all of the features that we desire (including for sustainability), and work for its continual expansion—until it entirely replaces the Old Society. Liedloff claims (p. 138) that: “It is sadly impractical, unrealistic, utopian to describe a culture to which ours could be changed in order to fill our continuum requirements.” I do not concur with that judgment, however, and believe that societal system change in some form is a *necessity*. So that the point is not *whether* we need societal system change but, rather, *how* to get it and what *form* it should take.

At an earlier point (p. 105) Liedloff—who had been bemoaning our “presumptuous brains”—declared that: “We have no choice but to find our way back to that knowledge common to the Yequana and our own ancestors, *through* the use of the intellect.” I am in entire agreement with that assessment, and would add only that in our “voyage of return” we recognize that we are not alone on this planet—which fact has at least two implications:

¹¹⁵ *The Theory of the Leisure Class*. Introduction by Robert Lekachman. New York: Penguin Books USA, Inc., 1994, p. 241. Originally published by The Macmillan Company in 1899.

- We must strive not only to bring change to *our* society, but to *others* as well—but eschewing the use of the “heavy-handed” procedures that we have tended to use with “inferior” other peoples.
- We must recognize that we will continue to have enemies (largely of our own making, as a result of our mistreatment of other peoples!), and therefore must continue to have defense capabilities in proportion to the threats “out there.” We have long had a Defense Department, but must make it into a department that matches its name: to date it has been rather *offensive*—in both meanings of the word!

Let us, then, identify (and comment upon, where appropriate) Liedloff’s proposals—beyond her key one, the need for a revolution in our child-care practices:

- A culture that desires to return to “continuum principles” needs (p. 138) “a language in which the human potential for verbalizing can grow.”
- Children need (p. 138) to be able to “hear adults speaking to one another,” and “should have contemporaries with whom to communicate” on their own “level of interest and development. It is also important that . . . [the child] always have associates slightly older than himself so that he can have a sense of where he is going before he gets there.”
- The (p. 138) “activities of a child need both companionship and example. A society that does not provide them will lose in the efficiency of its members as well as in their well-being.”
- A (p. 139) “generation gap” should not exist. “If the younger generation does not take pride in becoming like its elders, then the society has lost its own continuum, its own stability, and probably does not have a culture worth calling one, for it will be in a constant state of change from one unsatisfactory set of values to another.”
- (p. 139): “The constant promise of a ‘better tomorrow’ . . . is of no interest to the members of an evolved, stable, proud, and happy society.” “An unchanging way of life is called for which requires the work and cooperation of its members in amounts not excessive to their natures.” When I read this last passage, the Amish came to my mind. Although I have admiration for the Amish—and am glad that they are in our midst, for they demonstrate to the world that “there’s another way”—I don’t see much resemblance between them and the Yequana—for whom I have infinitely more admiration. It seems to me that because it is impossible for us to “go back” literally, it is foolish for us to think that we can re-create a society that—like that of the Yequana—will be unchanging. We can only be vigilant so that before we adopt something new, we carefully think through the implications of its adoption before doing so (as the Amish do now), to ensure that the goals of universal well-being and sustainability will not be affected adversely. It is, of

course, always possible that those goals will be *enhanced* by the adoption of new ideas and practices, and for that reason we should not reject the new out of hand. (I am sitting here typing this on my computer, and would not give up my computer for anything! Well, that's not *quite* true.)

- (p. 139): “Families should be in close contact with other families, and everyone, during his or her working life, ought to have the opportunity for companionship and cooperation.”
- (p. 140): “Children ought to be able to accompany adults wherever they go.”
- (p. 140): “In a continuum-correct society the generations would live under the same roof.” Inspired by the ideas of Charles Fourier¹¹⁶ [1772 – 1837], who proposed the creation of “phalanxes” (i.e., “grand hotels”), I would go even farther than Liedloff in arguing for the desirability of multi-family structures. Not only for the interactional possibilities that they open up, but for their contribution to sustainability goals.
- (p. 141): “Leadership would emerge naturally among the members of a society, very much as it does among children, and confine itself to taking initiatives only when individual ones are impractical.” I would add only that I would expect that on those occasions when leadership was called for, different individuals would emerge as temporary leaders, depending on the situation. In general, however, decisions would be made by consensus, so that leaders would simply not be needed—or even desired.
- (p. 141): “The number of people who [would] live and work together would vary from a few families to several hundred people, so that the individual would be interested in maintaining good relations with all the people with whom he deals.” I agree, for I recognize that although we humans have certain needs in common, each one of us is also unique in our needs. What this means from the standpoint of nature of residence is that some people have a desire to live “in nature” with just a few others nearby, others prefer to live in much larger agglomerations. I assume that the Good Society would have few if, any, cities, larger than the size of, e.g., Des Moines, Iowa—for the simple reason that there would be no justification for larger agglomerations.
- Although (p. 143) conformity in behavior is common in “advanced” societies (for whatever reasons), in a “continuum-correct” society there would be “freer expressions of innate characteristics, since the society has no need to fear or try to suppress them.” (Note that Liedloff had observed a high degree of individuality with the Yequana, but this was combined with a universal cooperative spirit.)

¹¹⁶ See, e.g., Jonathan Beecher, *Charles Fourier: The Visionary and His World*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1986.

- A “continuum-correct” society would be characterized (as Yequana society is) by a (p. 144) “supreme desire not to create tension.” Liedloff then went on to describe the “gentlemanliness” of the Yequana exemplified “when she had business to transact with Anchú, the Yequana chief.” After describing the nature of her relationship, in this case, with Anchú, she concluded (p. 145): “He was, one could say, trying to disengage my continuum sense from the innumerable interferences my own culture had imposed upon it.” That is, Anchú had such tremendous insight into the “mindset” of Liedloff, that he was able subtly guide her in the direction that she needed to go; and Liedloff gave the impression that *all* Yequana developed such a talent as a matter of course!
- We all need (p. 146) a variety of stimuli—our current way of life not satisfying that requirement. Liedloff added (p. 148) that: “A great part of our tragedy is that we have lost the sense of our ‘rights’ as members of the human species. Not only do we accept boredom with resignation, but innumerable other infringements upon what is left of our continuum after the ravages of infancy and childhood.” I agree with this assessment, but would like to think that it’s not that we “accept” boredom but, rather, become “resigned” to it—while, however, maintaining, somewhere deep inside, a strong desire for a different way of life. A desire that we are forced to suppress in our current society, but a desire that can be drawn upon if the right sort of New Society Movement were to get underway.

Pugh's Tome

The four writers whose works I have summarized and commented on so far have had in common some level of admiration for the “primitives” in our midst, past and present. This was, of course, especially true of Liedloff, and also Taylor, with Leonard a close third. The next work to which I will give attention “comes at” the question of our needs as humans from a somewhat different perspective—despite the appearance of the word “biological” in the title of the book to be reviewed.

We are informed by the book’s dust jacket that the author—George Edgin Pugh—had taught Physics at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, had been Deputy Assistant Director of the U. S. Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, had served with the Institute of Defense Analysis, and was (at the time of the book’s publication) President of Decision-Science Applications, a private firm. The title of his book—*The Biological Origin of Human Values*¹¹⁷—suggests that his background is in Biology (Evolutionary Biology in particular) or Philosophy, but in actuality the “disciplines” to which he makes reference (p. 17) are “automation, artificial intelligence, decision science, neural physiology, and behavioral science,” and (p. 35) cybernetics.

Early on (p. 28), Pugh defines “values” in a way that seemingly has little relevance to how the term is commonly defined—i.e., behaviors and/or situations judged to be “good.” He refers to model-building, and notes, in effect, that models are created to produce predictions, those

¹¹⁷ New York: Basic Books, Inc., Publishers, 1977.

predictions being stated in numerical terms (i.e., as measurements or counting numbers): “The designer of the [decision] system specifies a procedure by which such [numerical] ‘values’ are to be calculated. The decision system then uses this procedure to calculate a numerical ‘value’ for the outcome of *each* alternative that is considered. A ‘decision’ is made simply by selecting the alternative with the highest computed ‘value.’” Which seemingly means that the alternative selected would be the one which had predicted most accurately with reference to a real-world situation.

Those familiar with empirical research procedures will be familiar with the concept of a data matrix—a matrix whose columns designate variables, whose rows represent observational units, with the individual cells of the matrix containing “observations” expressed as numbers, and referred to as “values.” Some of the values are numbers on a measurement scale (ratio, interval, ordinal, etc.), some are numbers associated with the absolute scale of counting numbers. All, however, are assumed to have been obtained with care, and to be accurate. Use of the word “value” in this context is a widespread practice by empirical researchers, but it is startling to encounter the word in a work on “human values,” for such a meaning seems inappropriate in this context. However, Pugh is aware of this problem, and addresses it early on (p. 28): “This usage seems to differ from the traditional usage where value implies a judgment about desirability—good or bad, right or wrong, useful or useless. As will soon become apparent, however, our formal definition of the word *value* is a natural generalization of the traditional usage.” And although Pugh’s book is a difficult one (in comparison with, e.g., Liedloff’s), the fact of the matter is that the book *does* deal with “values” in the conventional sense, and much more besides—including the topic of primary interest here, human well-being.

Pugh’s book has amazing breadth and depth; therefore, any brief summary of, and commentary upon, the book cannot do justice to it. And if one’s focus is—as it is here—on just one aspect of the book, one especially runs the risk of distorting or misrepresenting Pugh’s “message.” If my attempt below to grapple with this impressive work falls short of the mark, the fault lies not with the nature of Pugh’s presentation but, rather with my own inability to scale the high wall that Pugh has built.

The depth of Pugh’s discussion of happiness (“joy” is the specific word he often uses) inspires one to think deeply about the origin and nature of happiness, and I would like to preface my discussion of Pugh’s ideas by putting happiness in a broad context. The following chart is my attempt to do so, using as its fundamental categories “actions” and “reactions.” Although it was inspired by my reading of Pugh and others, I must bear full responsibility for any errors that it contains.

Several features should be noted about the chart. First, the column heading “Subjective feeling” appears twice, as does “Behavior.” The reason for this is that some subjective reactions may result in *other* subjective reactions—and that some behaviors may result in *other* behaviors. Second, although the chart does not show this, physiological reactions within the body would always accompany a given subjective feeling—the nature of the physiological reactions

depending on the particular subjective feeling. The subjective feelings can usually be thought of as activated (“caused”) by those feelings. Third, a type of behavior that would always be associated with a given reaction would be a particular facial expression. The expression of, e.g., happiness (i.e., a “smile”) on one person’s face would not, of course, be identical to that on another person’s face, but the similarity would be sufficient that both expressions would qualify as “smiles.” Finally, note that I have included the category “Intellect” on my chart, despite the fact that it is not a “sense” in the common sense. My viewpoint here is that a hard-and-fast line does not exist between the senses (acting at an unconscious level) and the intellect; in different circumstances there are different degrees of involvement of the senses relative to the intellect. From, I might add, circumstances in which the senses are dominant to other circumstances in which the intellect plays a much more substantial role. The intellect is never in complete “command,” however, even though it often would like to “think” that it is.

What is especially striking about the chart is how the Reaction portion dwarfs the “Action” portion. The only actions identified are those related to obtaining sustenance and engaging in sexual activities, but a large number of reactions are identified, using the five senses and the intellect as the basis for their identification. What this imbalance reflects, I would argue, is that although the actions are necessary for the *survival* of a species, the *reactions* likely play an important role in the evolution of a species. I offer here no argument in support of this hypothesis, but mention it in the event that a reader finds it suggestive, and would like to pursue it. I would suggest, further, that just as the occurrence of premature births likely has been a factor of some importance for our evolution, our reaction of fear caused by the presence of predators likely was another key factor. To my knowledge, no one has pursued either of these hypotheses, and insofar as that is the case I welcome research related to both hypotheses.

The chart uses the word “pleasure” rather than “happiness” or “joy,” and suggests that pleasure can be a consequence of seeing certain things (e.g., while out hiking one comes upon a beautiful vista, at first experiences surprise, then pleasure—and continues viewing the vista for a period). One may be pleased by certain sounds one hears, certain things one touches, certain things one smells or tastes; and so far as the intellect is concerned, the feeling of pride may become a feeling of pleasure, and to a lesser degree one’s admiration for another may produce a feeling of pleasure in oneself. Note that the above chart tells us nothing about *what* gives us pleasure, so let me next present some statements by Pugh related to this topic. I present them in the order that they appear in the book; as a consequence, they are not necessarily in *logical* order.

Let me note in advance that most of the statements listed below have been extracted from Pugh’s Chapter 11, “Human ‘Social Values,’” pp. 263 – 296.

- (p. 265) “When a large animal is killed the food must not be monopolized by just the dominant animals [including humans and their ancestors] or the ones that actually accomplished the kill. So the success of a hunting society requires the development of sharing. The development of mechanisms of sharing seems to be common among hunting animals.” Note here that although Pugh here refers to the “success” of a hunting

society being dependent on the “development of sharing,” he offers no evolutionary explanation of how sharing began—or, for that matter, of how a “hunting society” came into existence in the first place. Note also that although this statement makes no reference to happiness, we will see shortly that Pugh does bring happiness into the picture—and gives it a highly important role, in fact.

- (p. 267) “Primitive human societies differ greatly from other primates in the *amount* of cooperation that is achieved. Within primitive human societies ‘sharing’ is a way of life.” (I would prefer that Pugh put “primitive” in quotation marks to suggest that he does not think of such societies as inferior—for he clearly does not think of them that way.)
- (p. 267) “The sharing is not limited to food, but extends to all types of resources. The practical result is that scarce resources are shared within the societies approximately in proportion to need. This behavior may reflect some innate and uniquely human values that evolved during the transition to a hunting economy.” (I should add here that one of my favorite books—*The Tender Carnivore and the Sacred Game*, by the late Paul Shepard¹¹⁸—emphasizes the role of hunting in human development. One of the many striking statements that Shepard made in this book is that (p. xv) we humans “have, in the course of a few thousand years, alienated ourselves from our only home, planet Earth, our only time, the Pleistocene, and our only companions, our fellow creatures.”)
- (p. 268) “Emotions are motivations that vary in response to the less obvious *social* and environmental stimuli. For this reason, it is natural that most facial expressions are connected with emotions rather than biological drives.”
- (p. 268) “Apparently facial expressions are not limited to ‘emotions’ but can be used to convey information about any motivational factors that are subject to variation.”
- (p. 268) It is “even possible that the primary purpose of an emotion could be simply to *generate* a facial expression, so that other individuals can respond!” (To refer to a “purpose” is to suggest that some Guiding Hand created emotions in humans, their ancestors, and other creatures. I’m sure that Pugh would argue that there is an evolutionary explanation for the origin of emotions *per se*, but he *implied* otherwise—and, in fact, failed to suggest any mechanism(s) that might have accounted for creatures developing emotions.)
- (p. 268) “A person who deliberately forces a smile is soon likely to feel more happy.” That is, there is an interesting causal relationship between the feeling of happiness and smiling: usually the feeling comes first, and then the smile, but this “natural” sequence

¹¹⁸ New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1973.

of causation can be “interfered” with so that if one “forces a smile,” likely this will cause one to *feel* happy! A most interesting fact!

- (p. 269) “Facial expressions also tend to be socially contagious. A smile generates other smiles, a sad or dejected face tends to make others sad.” (Another interesting fact, one of possible great importance for those involved in designing the Good Society!)
- (p. 269) “Because facial expressions serve as the main information channel for transmitting information concerning social motivation factors, it provides [i.e., they provide] some of the best clues available for deciphering the structure of human emotions and social motivations.”
- (p. 271) “It seems probable that the primitive origins of our concept of ‘fairness’ and ‘equity’ and ‘natural law’ can be traced to the emotion of anger.” This suggests that another reaction that could be added to my chart (under sight?) is “unfairness.” That if one perceives a situation of unfairness, this will cause a certain physiological reaction and a feeling of anger, and one will then act on that feeling (perhaps aggressively, but not necessarily).
- (p. 271) “This social role of anger makes it obvious why it is so important to have the emotion show in a facial expression.”
- (p. 272) “Joy and sorrow play a vital role in the motivation of human ‘social’ behavior. Joy is a positive value, sorrow is a negative value, so the individual is motivated to avoid sorrow and seek joy. Success in those social activities which serve a beneficial evolutionary function is rewarded with joy; failure to engage in such activities or to succeed in them is penalized with sorrow.” Pugh’s assertions here may be correct, but again notice that he posits no mechanism(s) for *how* either joy or sorrow arose in our species: to state how they *function* is not to *explain* them. Pugh’s use of the word “origin” in the title of his book once again turns out to be a disappointment.
- (p. 272) “Unlike the emotions of fear and anger which are as ancient as the crocodile, ‘joy’ and ‘sorrow’ are relatively recent evolutionary developments that are almost exclusively ‘social’ in their function.” Here, I like the fact that he recognizes that different emotions (reactions) appeared on the scene at different points in the “historical” development of our species; I just wish that he had made an effort to identify the mechanisms that came into play at different stages in our development. Perhaps someone has done this, but I am not aware of any work that addresses this matter.

Actions	Reactions				
	<u>Sense Involved</u>	<u>Subjective Feeling</u>	<u>Subjective Feeling</u>	<u>Behavior</u>	<u>Behavior</u>
Sustenance	<u>Sight</u>	Fear	→	Flight	
		Surprise	→ Fear	→ Flight	
		Surprise	→ Pleasure	→ Continue viewing	
		Pleasure	→	Continue viewing	
		Sorrow	→	Crying	
		Anger	→	Aggression	
		Jealousy/envy	→ Anger	→ Aggression	
		Pity/sympathy	→	Comforting	→ Lend assistance
Sexual	<u>Sound</u>	Startled	→ Fear	→ Flight	
		Fear	→	Flight	
		Pleasure	→	Continue listening	
	<u>Touch</u>	Pain	→	Withdrawal	→ Tend to wound, burn
		Pleasure	→	Continue touching	
	<u>Smell</u>	Revulsion/disgust	→	Withdrawal	
		Fear	→	Flight	
		Pleasure	→	Continue smelling	
	<u>Taste</u>	Revulsion/disgust	→	Discharge from mouth	
		Pleasure	→	Continue to eat	
	<u>Intellect</u>	Pride	→ Pleasure		
		Admiration	→ Pleasure		
		Indignation	→		
		Guilt	→		
		Shame	→		
		Embarrassment	→		

- (p. 272) “The ability to experience these two emotions seems to be linked both to intelligence and to an evolutionary strategy of cooperative social behavior.” This may very well be true but, Dr. Pugh, don’t you realize that you are being terribly glib in seemingly giving causal efficacy to “evolutionary strategy”?!
- (p. 272) “There is reason to believe that in both species [i.e., human and dog] this emotional structure [of joy and sorrow] grew out of an evolutionary strategy of cooperative hunting.” Thus, we learn that these emotions may have emerged in conjunction with hunting, but are told nothing as to the specific “events” that occurred that connected the emotions with hunting: to think of “evolutionary strategy” as a causal factor is to be glib, Dr. Pugh! You should know better!
- (p. 273) “The expressions [of joy and sadness] are contagious, so that one individual’s experience of joy or sadness tends to be shared by all. This automatically produces a motivation for cooperation.” That is, if a person is joyful, others associated with that person will “catch” that feeling, and a result is that all members of the group will develop positive feelings toward others in the group, which feelings will conduce cooperative behavior within the group. Another fact that planners of the Good Society should keep in mind as they go about their planning!
- (p. 273) “Joy or sorrow usually occurs as a consequence of success or failure in dealing with other objectives or values.” That is, if one experiences joy, this is not because one was consciously seeking joy but, rather, because some objective sought was attained or some value was realized. I would add, however, that joke-telling can create a feeling of joy in those who hear the jokes—so that although the Good Society needs to have many serious individuals, true, it also needs jesters and people who are gifted at telling humorous stories.
- (p. 273) “Because the experience of joy or sorrow is contagious, each individual can contribute to his [or her] own happiness by assisting another who is in distress. Like all human motivations, the importance and effectiveness of this basic ‘altruistic’ motivation varies widely between individuals. Nevertheless, the basic evolutionary purpose of these emotions and expressions seems clear.” Again, we are confronted with the glib—and basically vacuous—“evolutionary purpose.” Dr. Pugh, you know full well that it is inappropriate to personify “Evolution;” why, then, are you not more careful in your use of language?! Still, Pugh’s point here that “altruistic” behavior does not merely contribute to the well-being of the individual being helped, but does the same to the helper, is a point well taken. Yet the popular notion is that people are “naturally” selfish! The popular notion is not only “dead wrong” but pernicious; how, then, did it become popular? I wish I knew the answer to that question!

- (p. 277) “It is noteworthy that three of the expressions that seem new in man—joy or smiling, pain or fear, and disgust or contempt—all seem to be associated with the motivation of cooperative behavior.” On p. 272 Pugh had referred to fear as an ancient emotion; did he forget?
- (p. 281) “Almost all actual emotional experiences involve some combination of the basic emotions. But some emotions seem to be mutually exclusive, as if they are opposite poles of the same emotion.”
- (p. 285) “Almost all of the ‘social motives’ seem to be concentrated in just *two* of the nine [¹¹⁹] emotional dimensions, specifically the emotions of *joy versus sorrow* and *pride versus shame*.”
- (p. 285) “The individual seeks approval because approval contributes to pride and joy, whereas disapproval contributes to shame and sorrow.”
- (p. 285) There “seems to be a real difference between being ‘liked’ and being ‘admired,’ or between being ‘disliked’ and being ‘scorned.’”
- (p. 289) “People like to be liked (i.e., to be socially accepted). When we are socially attractive we are happier than when we are socially unattractive. Social acceptance contributes to joy; lack of social acceptance produces sorrow.”
- (p. 290) “The social ‘motives’ developed quite late in the evolutionary process after the design of the hypothalamus had been rather firmly established.
- (p. 290) These “new ‘motives’ developed sufficiently late in the evolutionary process so that the ‘rational’ mind had already acquired impressive powers of association and analysis.”
- (p. 290) “The association of joy with the rewarding facial expression (the smile) makes it a preferred emotion on which to build a cooperative motivational system.”

¹¹⁹ The nine “emotional dimensions” are listed in Table 11.2 on p. 281. They are as follows:

Sorrow	---	Joy
Shame	---	Pride
Scorn	---	Admiration
Revulsion	---	Acceptance
Anger	---	Tender Emotions
	---	Pity, Sympathy
Fear	---	
Surprise	---	Interest, Curiosity
	---	Amusement

- (pp 290 – 91) “In our modern society, individuals often feel sad, depressed, despondent, and frustrated—without purpose or motive in their lives, and they may have no real idea of the source of the problem. In many cases, they are simply failing to involve themselves in those types of activity which produce joy, so they suffer the penalty of sadness which also is intended to motivate these activities.” Dr. Pugh comes close to adopting a “blame the victim” mentality in this latter statement, but then redeems himself by noting that “we must remember that modern society is very different from the primitive societies in which the system evolved.” Thus, just as the “primitive” could not take *credit* for his or her happiness, the “modern” cannot take the *blame* for his or her sadness, depression. He adds (p. 291): “In the impersonal and verbally inhibited urban environment, it is easy to fall out of the habit of social participation.” That is, modern society is not *structured* so as to enable people to engage in behaviors that are “natural” to them—and that, therefore, would contribute to their subjective feelings of well-being (to say nothing of physical health).
- (p. 292) “The emotions of pride and joy . . . motivate a wide spectrum of activities and respond to a correspondingly wide spectrum of causal factors.”
- (p. 330) “There is no doubt that humor is conducive to group solidarity, and this tends to enhance the human motivation for cooperative social behavior.”
- (p. 330) “With the evolution of man, two important changes occurred that make humor possible. The development of the emotion of joy (as a generalized motivator for cooperative behavior) provided a ready-made facial expression through which ‘amusement’ could be expressed, so that humor could be socially motivated. The development of language provided a mechanism which made the communication of counterexamples possible.”
- (p 434) “The modern social and technical environment confronts us in hundreds of different ways with demands for intensive specialization that narrow our life-style and limit our ability to experience the joy and beauty of life. The human animal is equipped by evolution with a value system which motivates *diversity* of activity.” Rather than the specialization, repetition, and monotony that characterize our way of life today!

We have, then, with Pugh a number of tantalizing thoughts relative to human well-being—what we need for well-being, why the emotion of joy may have emerged in our evolutionary history, and what functions it may serve. We encounter more sophisticated thinking than we find in, e.g., Liedloff—which fact, however, should not cause us to dismiss what Liedloff has written. (I, for one, believe that her emphasis on proper child care—a topic totally ignored by Dr. Pugh—is of extreme importance.)

The set of quotations that I have chosen to reproduce above (along with my comments on some of them) may give the impression that there are gaps in Dr. Pugh's thinking, and that the ideas that he is trying to convey are not well thought-through in his own mind. The fact that I presented the quotations in the order that they appeared in the book, rather than in a logical order, likely contributed to those impressions. However, having devoted a considerable amount of time to the study of Pugh's book, I must admit that although it has in it much that I admire, and agree with, the book leaves me with the feeling that it raises questions in my mind that are not adequately answered in the book, or answered clearly enough. Indeed, the book raises questions in my mind that I am not even able to articulate! Thus, the book leaves me with a sense of incompleteness—and frustration.

I do not want to complain overly much about the book, however, because any book that leaves me with such a feeling also *thereby* stirs my creative juices, and forces me to think seriously about issues that I may not have given serious thought before. A book such as Pugh's leaves me with a feeling of discomfort, but I also recognize that such a feeling can lead to the creative solution to problems—and for that reason I actually *welcome* the feeling of discomfort that the book gives me. Ironically, although I agree with Dr. Pugh that joy has played an important role in evolution, and is a feeling that one should value, and that I cannot say that there is any joy in a feeling of discomfort, my *intellect* tells me that I should be thankful that Dr. Pugh has brought some degree of discomfort into my life! For that discomfort has stimulated me to think about topics which I regard as of great importance, but are topics to which I had given little thought. At this point, I can't claim that this intellectual stimulation has had any significant results, but I have hope that it may—and that hope helps sustain me. Thank you, Dr. Pugh!

I am not ready to leave Dr. Pugh's book, however! The quotations that I have presented from Dr. Pugh's book have presented a variety of ideas relative to human happiness, but I have not yet provided, and commented upon, his "needs" list—i.e., his list of what we humans need for a high level of subjective well-being. The list to which I am referring is given in his Table 11.3, titled "Illustrative List of Instinctive Human Motives" (p. 284), and discussed on pp. 283 – 287. Let us, then, next list what I would call "needs" and Dr. Pugh refers to as "instinctive human motives," and comment on each. Pugh's list contains eleven items, but I will add a twelfth item to it—one that he adds near the end of his book, and that I regard as too important to overlook.

- A desire for dominance. Pugh asserts (p. 285) that: "The dominance structure is so widespread in the animal world that it almost certainly reflects a truly innate motive." "In humans, the dominance drive seems to be reflected in a general competitive rivalry involving a desire for power, for athletic success, for business success, or for social leadership." Unfortunately, on this point Pugh seems to reflect "pop" literature of recent years (e.g., works of Robert Ardrey) rather than research by anthropologists. Also, this comment seems to reflect an absence of recognition of the Discrepancy, and its relevance

for human behavior.¹²⁰ The truth seems to be, rather, that although leadership is not absent from “primitive” societies, it seems to be situational and temporal rather than permanent, and not at all despotic. It’s not even clear that adult males exercise more influence than do adult females in “primitive” societies.

- A desire for approval. He asserts (p. 285): “The clearest evidence for this is an ‘innate motive’ found in the behavior of a small child and his desire to please.” And, “the existence of scorn and shame in a very limited list of human facial expressions provides strong evidence of an instinctive desire for approval.” I concur with Pugh on this point.
- A desire for social acceptance. Previously I had quoted Pugh’s statement that “there seems to be a real difference between being ‘liked’ and being ‘admired,’ or between being ‘disliked’ and being ‘scorned.’” He continued (p. 286): “The evaluative sensations in this motive are similar to those in the dominance and approval motives, but the emphasis seems to be more on joy versus sorrow than on pride versus shame.” Perhaps he makes this distinction on solid grounds, but I’m not convinced in my own mind that the distinction is worth making.
- Gregariousness. (p. 286) “This is a very primitive instinct. It is the motive that keeps the herd or the flock together. It amounts to a fear of being alone.” My own view here is that fear may have been the original motivator involved in the creation of groups, but that in the case of humans—with their high intelligence and great ability to communicate—interaction itself became enjoyable, so that gregariousness became a “glue” that *held* groups together: the original cause of group formation (a negative factor—fear) came to be replaced by a positive factor—the *attractiveness* that membership in a group came to have for those living in one. Related to this, I believe it possible that although the groups formed by our ancestors had a genetic basis (the mechanism involved being sexual selection?), over time *learning* came to play an increasingly prominent role. The *capability* for individuals finding group life attractive had a genetic basis, but the *realization* of that capability is something that developed over time as our ancestors came to *practice* group living, I believe.
- Enjoyment of conversation. (p. 286) “Even a casual look at the facial expressions of a group engaged in conversation makes it clear that they ‘enjoy’ the conversation.” I agree. The only question that I have is: Did the capacities necessary for engaging in conversation (intelligence and an ability to communicate) develop *before* our ancestors

¹²⁰ I find it of interest that Thomas H. Huxley [1825 – 1895] recognized the basics of this concept—that society has changed but human biology hasn’t—but seemed to have too “progressive” of a view of human history to recognize The Discrepancy. See his “Evolution and Ethics. Prolegomena,” [1894] in *Evolution and Ethics and Other Essays*. New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1899, p. 38. Note that this volume also contains Huxley’s 1893 Romanes lecture. The book is available at <http://books.google.com/>

began to converse or, rather, develop *in conjunction* with the “practice” of conversation? If the latter, what additional mechanisms were involved that produced genetic change—and is there any possibility that “Lamarckian”-like mechanisms may (also—or only) have been involved?

- Activity motive. (p. 286) “The desire to exercise the body and exploit one’s physical skills seems obvious in the play behavior of all the higher animals.” I would add that in not being a “planted” species—being, rather, a mobile species—and thereby having a *need* for movement (for acquiring sustenance, and fleeing predators, etc.), our ancestors would have acquired an anatomy, physiology, etc. that *enabled* us to move. And that if we failed to do so, our bodies (e.g., our muscles—including the heart) would atrophy. Pugh adds that “The desire to exercise the body and exploit physical skills seems to be connected primarily with the value sensation of joy.” Suggesting that “evolution” (forgive me for personifying here!) “worked it out” so that we would receive joy from physical activity, and thereby be motivated to engage in exercise on a regular basis. One of the ironies of body life is that although we are “designed” to engage in physical activities on a regular basis, the everyday lives that our “high standard of living” imposes on us makes such exercise difficult. So that because our work lives prevent us from getting an adequate amount of physical activity, we must spend much of our “free” time running or “working out” at an athletic club! How pathetic!
- Enjoyment of humor. (p. 286) “We do not decide to laugh; we laugh automatically when something funny occurs. Humor produces a short-lived joy. The joy contributes to the enjoyment of social activities, and in this sense it has ‘social’ survival value. But humor is fundamentally an ‘Intellectual Value’ whose real purpose concerns the motivation of mental processes.” (Pugh pursues the matter more thoroughly in Chapter 13, “Our ‘Intellectual Values,’ pp. 326 – 346.) A point that I would add here is that at times one “laughs so hard that he cries,” and involuntarily sheds some tears—“tears of joy.” So that it is of interest that tears are associated not only with great sadness but with great enjoyment. I suppose that someone has offered an evolutionary explanation of this, but if so, I am not aware of it. I should also add that at times one feels “touched” by something that is said or observed, and that tears will automatically flow when *that* occurs. I’m not sure how the emotion of being “touched” would fit into Pugh’s discussion of emotions.
- Social preferences. Here Pugh declares that (p. 286) people “prefer individuals with a similar rearing background. Infants prefer females to male adults. Young adults prefer others of the opposite sex, etc.” Pugh here seems to be referring to preferences that develop at different stages of one’s life. It would seem, however, that although genetic programming may be involved at puberty, such that one “naturally” develops an interest in members of the “opposite” sex (unless one is a homosexual), the preference that an

infant has for its mother is an *acquired* one—resulting from the more frequent contact (usually) that the mother has with a child than the father. Once one reaches adulthood one’s intellect may become a more important factor in one’s social preferences—in that one may especially come to enjoy the company of others who share similar intellectual interests. Or other sorts of interests, for that matter—such as an interest in a sport or sports, an interest in music of a certain type, an interest in art, etc.

- Team motive. (p. 287) “The desire to work with others for common goals probably evolved as a cooperative hunting instinct.” I agree that the development of hunting for the purpose of satisfying sustenance needs likely was a contributing factor in group formation and the development of cooperative behavior, and that the development of intelligence and an ability to communicate helped in making the hunting experience an *enjoyable* one for those who engaged in it. Thus, those who engaged in hunting came to look upon it not so much as “work”—despite the fact that it helped with the group’s sustenance needs—as a pleasurable event to look forward to. And not only for the companionship that it offered, but also for the challenges that it might present. Which suggests the question: Why does not Pugh list a need to be confronted with *challenges*? For given that we have brains and mobility capabilities, do we not receive enjoyment in using both? How else does one explain what “drives” mountain climbers and explorers?
- Constructive motive. (p. 287) “The desire to make or build something may have emerged as an ‘instinctive motive’ with the development of a tool-using culture. Certainly such motives would facilitate the use and development of tools, once tool using had begun to appear.” When I read this, I couldn’t help but think of my dad, who spent most of his life as a carpenter, and upon retirement kept busy in his shop making grandfather clocks, sconces, bowls, etc. for his five children, doing repair work on items for the local Historical Society, acquiring a 1921 Ford automobile with many missing parts, and making it into a truck,¹²¹ etc. My dad was a skilled craftsman who enjoyed making things for the sheer joy of making things—and then giving them to those he loved. Is it any wonder that I am getting choked up just writing these words?! Yes, I believe you, Dr. Pugh, when you say that we humans have a constructive motive, for I have had the honor of seeing it in my dad. The tragedy of our way of life is that it does not enable this need to find fruition in most of us.
- Contribution motive. (p. 287) “A desire to do or contribute something meaningful for society would certainly have survival value.” Pugh adds: “The value sensations associated with this desire to contribute meaningfully to society seem to be almost exactly the same as those involved in the constructive motive, although there may be a

¹²¹ It is now in the local museum, and is still brought out for parades.

greater mixture of pride in the final sense of accomplishment.” It seems to me, however, that the constructive motive has as its “purpose” making a contribution, so that I see no point in identifying this as a separate motive.

In Pugh’s final (and short) Chapter 18 (“Beyond the Beginning,” pp. 447 – 449) he stated (p. 448): “If we were to lose our reverence for cosmic mysteries of human existence we would damage some of our most important human values.” I would add, in fact, that we humans have long been at a stage where one of our basic *needs* is “spirituality” in some sense.¹²² In an unpublished paper, written several years ago, I looked at the development of Hebrew religion from a Discrepancy perspective, thereby giving a “naturalistic” explanation of that religion’s development. I indicated in that paper, however, that I recognized mysteries that, I know, I will never understand, and that despite the fact that I “knoweth not” the nature of God,¹²³ that I am a theist. My objection to the Christianity to which I have been exposed is that its orientation is to orthodoxy, whereas its orientation should be to orthopraxy: the latter is, in my judgment, the true “thrust” of the Bible (Jewish or Christian).

What conclusions can be offered regarding Pugh’s book? I find it difficult to summarize even the small portion of the book that I have been referring to (the part that focuses on happiness)—in part because I perceive an inadequate lack of integration in Pugh’s presentation, in part because of an inability on my part to grasp what Pugh is trying to say. I find many provocative statements in the book, but am less sure as to what they mean—and in many cases detect too much glibness in the explanations that he offers.

In concluding this discussion of Pugh I would like to note that although makes no direct reference to The Discrepancy, I find certain statements in the book that suggest that Pugh recognizes the existence of The Discrepancy:

- (p. 10) “There is reason to believe that much of the discontent and alienation we find in modern society may be the result of our failure to ensure that the modern social environment remains compatible with our ancient and ‘innate’ human values.”
- (p. 291) “ . . . modern society is very different from the primitive societies in which the [motivational] system evolved.”

¹²² David E. Comings, who also has a naturalistic perspective on religion, takes a similar position in his lengthy (694 page!) *Did Man Create God? Is Your Spiritual Brain at Peace With Your Thinking Brain?* Duarte, CA: Hope Press, 2008.

¹²³ I find it interesting that the sermon that I heard on Mothers’ Day (in 2010) emphasized that the Bible itself never *describes* God but, rather, uses various literary devices in referring to God. This reminded me of a book in my library: Leonard L. Thompson, *Introducing Biblical Literature: A More Fantastic Country*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1978.

- (p. 423) “Our innate values were not designed to operate in a massive impersonal society, and the evidence is overwhelming that in fact they do not operate effectively in such an environment.”
- (p. 429) “In a primitive society, where the social motives are more routinely stimulated, the individual gradually learns what activities he enjoys.”

However, Pugh also stated (p. 210): “The human infant is motivated by instinctive values that are a legacy of the primitive past. The values may not be entirely appropriate to our modern society, but they are genetically fixed in our human inheritance. They cannot be changed without genetically redesigning man.” In stating that these inherited values “may not be entirely appropriate to our modern society,” and adding a reference to “genetically redesigning man,” Pugh seemed to suggest that we must simply resign ourselves to this situation—for talk about our “redesigning” would be foolish, as would be the abandonment of “modern society.”

However, in Chapter 17 (“Humanizing the Social Environment,” pp. 419 – 446) Pugh made the bold statement (p. 420): “What appears to be needed is a basic restructuring of the existing social system so that it can more effectively harness our innate altruistic motivations within the context of a social environment that is orders of magnitude larger than the small social groups for which the innate human values were originally designed.” And Pugh then went on, in the chapter, to comment on the various sectors of modern society—what is wrong in them, and what changes might be instituted. Thus, this chapter demonstrates that he recognized, implicitly at least, that a Discrepancy occurred millennia ago, and that this has been, and is, a source of problems. But Pugh never demonstrated a sufficient grasp of the Discrepancy to indicate that he was aware of all of its effects. For example, he evinced no awareness of “compensatory”¹²⁴ behavior, a type of behavior that is so common in our society—a type of behavior that is in part attributable to the Discrepancy, in part attributable to a failure to meet societal “standards” (so that it is hard to untangle its actual causation).

At one point in his “Human ‘Social Values’” chapter Pugh stated (p. 291): “One of the major objectives of the present book is to show that these innate ‘social motives’ may be as real and as much a part of the human psychology as hunger and thirst. If social and urban planning is to meet human needs effectively, such ‘innate motives’ should be explicitly considered as we develop plans. Unfortunately, our present understanding of such motives is extremely vague.” I agree wholeheartedly with Pugh’s assertion that we humans have certain needs other than sustenance needs that are as important as the sustenance needs, and that those needs (e.g., the need for “meaning” associated with Viktor Frankl) are not well understood at present. Where I disagree with Pugh, however, is on the issue of *how* those needs should be addressed. Pugh’s

¹²⁴ I prefer the term “substitutionary” because such activities never truly *compensate* for the activities that they “replace.” A book in my library that deals with this subject rather well is Donald Gilbert McKinley, *Social Class and Family Life*. New York: The Free Press of Glencoe, 1964.

language clearly suggests that he looks to government as our “savior;” I, however, must admit to having been an admirer of sociologist C. Wright Mills in my younger years, and as a consequence became introduced to the ideas of such “classic” thinkers as Roberto Michels, Gaetano Mosca, and Vilfredo Pareto, and thereby “know” that it is foolish to look to government for “salvation.”

Slater’s “Loneliness”

The next work to which I would like to give attention is one with a very different focus than that of Pugh’s, one on diet. However, before doing so I wish to make brief reference to another of my favorite books, Philip E. Slater’s *The Pursuit of Loneliness: American Culture at the Breaking Point* (cited at the beginning of this chapter). This book (and Slater’s other books as well) is filled with so much brilliance that I will not insult the book by commenting upon it in detail but, rather, will simply note that Slater states early on (p. 5) that he sees “three human desires that are deeply and uniquely frustrated by American culture:

- “(1) The desire for *community*—the wish to live in trust and fraternal cooperation with one’s fellows in a total and visible collective entity.
- “(2) The desire for *engagement*—the wish to come directly to grips with social and interpersonal problems and to confront on equal terms an environment which is not composed of ego-extensions.
- “(3) The desire for *dependence*—the wish to share responsibility for the control of one’s impulses and the direction of one’s life.”

Slater lacks Pugh’s technical sophistication, and his comments are more in the category of personal insights than research findings, but Slater is a provocative and engaging writer, and I have the utmost regard for his body of writing. As to the three “needs” that he identifies, I am in full agreement with him—but would add that much more can be said about human needs, and that now 41 years after the publication of his book the issue of survival from ecocatastrophes looms much larger than it did in 1970.

A Paleolithic Prescription

*The Paleolithic Prescription: A Program of Diet and Exercise and a Design for Living*¹²⁵ is dedicated (p. vi) “To the memory of our ancestors, whose genes we bear, and to the small number of remaining hunters and gatherers who have taught so much about ourselves.” It thereby bears similarity to the other books discussed in this paper, but in having a focus on diet it has a unique focus. However, its Table XX (pp. 279 – 283) presents research findings under several heading in addition to ones related to diet, the heading used being: Nutrition, Tobacco

¹²⁵ Authored by S. Boyd Eaton, Marjorie Shostak, and Melvin Konner. New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1988.

and Alcohol, Exercise, Baby and Child Care, and Women's Roles, and I will primarily give attention to the 39 points they make in that table. First, though, some introductory comments.

The basic purpose of the book is to present (p. xiii) "a general plan for recapturing certain features of our ancestors' lives and for integrating these elements with our own life-style [I would say "way of life," rather]. If all Americans and citizens of other industrialized nations adopted these recommendations there is little question that our collective burden of chronic diseases would be greatly reduced." Note that their reference to "integrating" certain elements "with our own life-style" indicates that the authors' interest is not in bringing about societal system change but only in adding some patches to our existing way of life. I disagree strongly with this position, but *do* agree with all of their recommendations; my difference with them is that I would go *beyond* their recommendations.

In their initial chapter (Chapter 1, "The Paleolithic Legacy," pp. 1 – 10) the authors begin by noting that during the Paleolithic period—i.e., the "Old Stone Age"—people (p. 4) "lived in seminomadic bands, dispersed over the various kinds of landscape—savanna, coastal, riverine, and subglacial—that comprised the habitable world. They moved with the seasons, following game, water, and plant foods and aggregated and separated as ecological and interpersonal situations required. They were lean, lithe, and strong—the imprint of the physical activity central to their lives. Although their diet was occasionally insufficient in quantity, and hunger was sometimes part of their world, they usually had enough; and when they did, the food was qualitatively ideal to maintain health."

"Social isolation [p. 4], with its now established threat to mental and physical health, was unknown to them. Stresses were numerous, but they arose out of the realities of life, not from clock watching, traffic jams, or class consciousness. Their lives were spent working [¹²⁶], playing, eating, sleeping, entertaining, and worshiping—with a close-knit group of people who, as much as they might complain, cared for one another. When tensions arose that couldn't be resolved, they were free to move off and join other friends and relatives in a different band for varying lengths of time. Their children grew up in that same context of closeness, nurturance, and love."

With the Agricultural Revolution that began about 10,000 years ago, however, things began to change. (p. 5) "Technological progress, aside from its complex influence on the biosphere, has also had a profound effect on human biology. Men and women in modern Western society are exposed to conditions of life that differ radically from those of the pre-Neolithic epoch—those which, through Darwinian natural selection [¹²⁷], determined the biological characteristics of the

¹²⁶ Except that they did not regard their sustenance activities as "work" as we understand that word; the interaction that they engaged in while "working" was enjoyable, and therefore made "clock-watching" unnecessary!

¹²⁷ The authors are, of course, wrong in assuming that Darwinian natural selection played any role whatsoever in human evolution.

human species as it now exists. When conditions of life for any animal population deviate from those to which it has genetically adapted, biological maladjustment—discordance—is inevitable. The human species is no exception. For us, discordance between our current life-style and the one in which we evolved has promoted the chronic and deadly ‘diseases of civilization’: the heart attacks, strokes, cancer, diabetes, emphysema, hypertension, cirrhosis, and like illnesses that cause 75 percent of all mortality in the United States and other industrialized nations.” Note here that the authors’ use of “discordance” is equivalent to my use of the word Discrepancy.

The authors note, relative to the “integrating” to which they had referred on p. viii, that (p. 8) “In an important sense, of course, there is no going back. We cannot totally recover the Paleolithic way of life, and most of us wouldn’t want to. We are too satisfied with our safety [?] and our comfort—and why shouldn’t we be? But precisely because of our advantageous position, we should be able to pick and choose among the features of Paleolithic life. We can leave behind what is impractical or unsatisfying while adopting those features that can improve our current health, both physical and mental.” Perhaps the authors would agree with Slater’s comment (*op. cit.*, p. 144) that “there is no particular reason why the United States could not become the center of the most beautiful, benign, and exciting culture the world has ever known.” I’m not sure, however, how far in the direction of societal system change the authors would be willing to go. Given, however, that their writing—for all of its solid empirical basis—evinces little in the way of imagination, I suspect that they simply can’t imagine going beyond “integration.” And I am convinced that that’s not enough.

“In this book,” the authors add (p. 8), . . . we intend to ‘invent a machine that will walk’—a naturally healthy human being whose life-style is consistent with the long, balanced course of evolution. That is, we will show how it is possible to return to the way of life of our Paleolithic ancestors—not by imitating it exactly, but by using its key elements to invent a new pattern. This pattern, designed to work in our supermarkets and kitchens and gymnasiums, will help us match the fitness and strength of our ancestors who lived 40,000 years ago.” This statement tells us a great deal about their lack of imagination: they refer to “inventing a new pattern,” but assume that that new pattern must include supermarkets and the other basic features of existing society. On this point I by no means concur!

Their Chapter 3 is on “The Discordance Hypothesis” (pp. 38 – 68)—what I refer to as the Discrepancy concept—but the headings in this chapter reveal the limited nature of their interpretation of that “hypothesis”: Atherosclerosis, Hypertension, Diabetes, Chronic Obstructive Lung Disease, Cancer, Osteoporosis, Hearing Loss, Dental Caries, Alcohol-related Diseases, Diverticular Disease, and Obesity. In other words, their orientation is almost solely with health issues. Still, what they write about that topic is of great importance, so I do not wish to be overly critical of the book: its scope is narrow, but its contents relate to my general theme of the Discrepancy and its causes-consequences—and how to reduce it—so that the book is certainly worthy of discussion in this chapter. Besides, I am aware of no other comparable book.

An important point that the authors make near the end of the book is that in “primitive” societies (p. 252) “Old people are often respected, turned to for advice in times of conflict, expected to transmit skills and lore to younger people, and counted on to help with child care (while forming intense bonds with their grandchildren).” How different is the situation in today’s society! And the reason for this should be obvious, although the authors do not mention it: In a changing society such as ours, one’s knowledge tends to become progressively obsolete, so that for that reason alone one becomes less valuable to the society—and given the greater longevity in our society as compared with a “primitive” society, this growing obsolescence is compounded by becoming an increasing burden on the “productive” portion of the society. In a “primitive” society not only is change not noticeable, but longevity is less—meaning that the older members of the society are its most important asset. Can this problem be resolved? If so, we receive no recommendations from the authors of this book.

The book does, however, report some important empirical findings, so let us now turn to them. With each “Paleolithic Prescription” the authors give a “rating” from 1 to 5, as follows:

1. Noncontroversial.
2. Widely, but not invariably, accepted.
3. Controversial, no consensus.
4. Generally rejected.
5. Not commonly addressed by authorities.

The “ratings” refer to the views of “experts;” after each “prescription” I will indicate their “rating” in parentheses:

- A high protein diet (approximately 20% of calories) (3 or 4)
- A low-fat diet (approximately 20% of calories). (1)
- A diet higher in polyunsaturates than saturates. (2 or 3)
- Dietary cholesterol should be “less important than fat intake; up to 600 mg/day acceptable *if* fat is less than 20% of total calories and if polyunsaturates are greater than saturates.” (3 or 4)
- A high carbohydrate diet—approximately 60% of calories. (2)
- “Majority from complex carbohydrate; marked reduction in sugar and refined flour intake.” (1)
- A diet with a high fiber intake, about 20 – 100 grams/day (includes both soluble and insoluble fiber). (3)

- Fiber should come mainly from fruits and vegetables rather than from cereal grains. (3 or 5)
- Diet should be supplemented with beta-carotene, vitamin E, and water-soluble vitamins—but not to megadose levels. (3)
- A reduced sodium intake. (2)
- More potassium than sodium in one's diet. (2 or 5)
- A calcium intake of about 1500 mg/day (except for people with kidney stones). (3)
- No tobacco use. (1)
- Moderate to no drinking of alcoholic beverages. (1 or 2)
- Aerobic exercise, 30 – 90 minutes, three times weekly. (2)
- Resistance exercise, 30 – 90 minutes, three times weekly. (3 or 5)
- A 5 – 15 minute warm-up period prior to exercise. (1)
- A 5 – 15 minute cool-down period after exercise. (1)
- Stretching at the end of the cool-down period. (1)
- Stretching at the end of warm-up. (2)
- Cyclical variation in the form of a specific exercise. (5)
- Breast-feeding of infants for at least one year. (1)
- Early indulgence of children. (2)
- Infants having close physical contact with parents. (3)
- Young children sleeping with parents. (4 or 5)
- The avoidance of physical punishment. (2)
- Children in multi-age playgroups. (5)
- Children learning through play. (2)

- Liberal sexual restrictions for children.¹²⁸ (4)
- No early teenage pregnancy. (1)
- Equal participation of women with men in social, political, and economic affairs. (3)
- A valuing of women's economic contribution (other than housework). (2)
- Fitness and exercise a priority for both sexes from childhood on.
- Close and frequent physical contact with children (especially by the mother). (3)
- Cooperation among women in child care and in the workplace. (2 or 3)
- Safe play groups for children, with access to parents. (2)
- Childhood activities that involve both sexes. (3 or 4)
- Grandmothers active in the care of children (why not grandfathers too?!). (2)
- Women as assertive achievers. (2)

These, then, are the “prescriptions” offered by the authors—based on the one hand on studies of modern-day “primitives” by anthropologists, and on studies of “moderns” sponsored by the American Heart Association, American Cancer Society, American Diabetes Association, etc. Their focus is on physical health (but with little reference to adult males), but they seem curiously unaware of the role of psychological factors in causing certain illnesses—i.e., the so-called psychosomatic diseases. Their emphasis is on “patching up” the existing society rather than changing it drastically—perhaps because they don’t think that substantial change is possible, or perhaps because they are satisfied with *their* lives, and thereby unable to consider societal system change seriously as a solution to our problems. Also, although they refer (p. 5) to the influence of “technological progress” on the biosphere, they evidently don’t perceive this “progress” as enough of a threat to be given more than a passing notice. In short, their book contains much in the way of useful advice—most of it well-supported by research—but the scope of their book is rather limited.

Shepard’s “Coming Home”

Whereas the authors of *The Paleolithic Prescription* want to modify modern life somewhat on the basis of the more “natural” way of life of our Stone Age ancestors, the attitude of the late

¹²⁸ A recent book (which I have not read, but seen reviewed) seems to go beyond this recommendation by arguing for more such “liberality” for adults. Christopher Ryan and Cecilia Jethá, *Sex at Dawn: The Prehistoric Origins of Modern Sexuality*. New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2010.

Paul Shepard is indicated in the title of his (posthumously published) *Coming Home to the Pleistocene*.¹²⁹ Shepard¹³⁰ noted (p. 173) that we cannot “build a new twenty-first century society corresponding to a hunting/gathering society,” but “What we can do is single out those many things, large and small, that characterized the social and cultural life of our ancestors—the terms under which our genome itself was shaped—and incorporate them as best we can by creating a modern life around them.” That is, rather than taking modern society as the “given” and then decorating it with certain features of “primitive” life (such as diet, exercise, and child rearing), we should take “primitive” society as the “given” and then improve upon it, using the knowledge and technology that has developed over the past 10,000 years. The difference between Shepard and the authors of *Paleolithic Prescription* is a subtle one, but one that nevertheless is an important one.

Shepard noted that (p. 2) “Historical as well as ideological reasons work against reclaiming our human and prehuman past.” And (p. 15), “History’s judgment of the primitive world is a litany of excuses why we cannot go back.” Yet, we *must* go back in some significant sense, Shepard would say, if we are to have a society within which a high level of well-being prevails, and we are to continue to survive as a species. Those who have—like Shepard and the authors of *Prescription*—advocated for “going back” have been (surprise! surprise!) ridiculed for that advocacy. Fortunately, however, they have not desisted from their efforts, and the body of work that they have produced—some of which I have summarized and quoted here—may very well prove to be the most important that has been produced in recent years.

I will not here try to summarize Shepard’s book—as it is difficult to convey the flavor and content of his writing, given its level of sophistication—but, rather, will simply repeat his list of “Aspects of a Pleistocene Paradigm” (Table 2, pp. 171 – 172. The list contains 71 items under the headings Ontogenetic, Social, and Other. I use no quotation marks here because I quote the entire table.

Ontogenetic

1. Formal recognition of stages in the whole life cycle.
2. The progressive dynamics of bonding and separation.
3. Earth-crawling freedom by 18 months.
4. Richly textured¹³¹ play space.

¹²⁹ Washington, DC: Island Press, 1998. Edited by Florence R. Shepard.

¹³⁰ Whereas Shepard’s book is a highly sophisticated one, a book that is rather similar, but more accessible is: Robin Clarke and Geoffrey Hindley, *The Challenge of the Primitives*. New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1975.

¹³¹ The book says “textures” but I assume that this is a typo.

5. No reading prior to ‘symbolic’ age (about 12 years).
6. All-age access to butchering scenes.
7. All-age access to birth, copulation, death scenes.
8. Few toys.
9. Early access via speech to rich species taxonomy.
10. Formal celebration of life-stage passages such as initiation.
11. Rich animal-mimic play and other introjective processes.
12. Non-peer-group play.
13. Parturition and neonate ‘soft’ environment.
14. Access to named places in connection with mythology.
15. Extended family or dense social structure.
16. Extended lactation.
17. Play as the internal prediction of the living world.
18. Little storage, accumulation, or provision.
19. Diversity of ‘work.’
20. Handmade tools and other objects.
21. No monoculture.
22. Independent family subsistence plus customary sharing.
23. Ecotypic economy—keyed to place.
24. No landownership in the sense of ‘fee simple.’
25. Little absolute territoriality.
26. No fossil fuel use.
27. Minimal housekeeping.

28. No domestic plants or animals.

Social

29. Prestige based on demonstrated integrity.
30. Little or no heritable rank.
31. Size of genetic/marriage/linguistic group or tribe: 500 – 3000.
32. Clan and other membership giving progressive identity with age.
33. Limited exposure to strangers.
34. Hospitality to outsiders.
35. Functional roles of aunts and uncles.
36. Postreproductive advisory functions such as grandparental roles.
37. Size of fire-circle group: 10 adults (council of the whole)
38. Occasional larger congregations.
39. Emphasis on mnemonics with its generational repository.
40. Participant politics vs. representational or authoritarian.
41. Vernacular gender and age functions.
42. Totemic analogical thought of eco-predicated logos.
43. Dynamic, emergent, and dispersed leadership.
44. Decentralized power.
45. Intertribal tension-reduction rites (song duels, peacepipe).
46. Cosmologically rather than sociohierarchically focused ritual.

Other

47. Periodic mobility, no sedentism.
48. Conceptual notion of spirit in all life, numinous otherness.
49. Centrality of narrative, routing recall and story.

50. Dietary omnivory.
51. Rare-species demography.
52. Subordination of art to cosmology.
53. Participatory rather than audience-focused music.
54. Sensual science ('science of the concrete') vs. intangible science.
55. Celebration of social and cosmological function of meat eating.
56. Religious regulation of the special effects of plant substances.
57. Extensive foot travel.
58. Only organic medicine.
59. Regular dialogue on dream experience.
60. The 'game' approach—to love, not hate, the opponent.
61. Attention to listening, to the sound environment as voice.
62. Running.
63. Attention to kinship and the 'presence' of ancestors.
64. Attunement to the daily cycle and seasonality.
65. No radical intervention on fetal genetic malformations.
66. Immediate access to the wild, wilderness, solitude.
67. Nonlinear time and space—no history, progress, or destiny.
68. Sacramental (not sacrificial) trophism.
69. Formal recognition of a gifted subsistence.
70. Participation in hunting and gathering.
71. Freedom—to come and go, to choose skills, to marry or not, etc.

A list like this leaves one breathless! For some, it will whet the appetite to read this book and other books by Shepard—which I would encourage anyone to do. The list leaves one, however,

with the question: How could we possibly accomplish all of these “goals”? And it is true that one will not find any “recipe” in *Coming Home*. The list does, however, make clear the point that these “goals” cannot be regarded as “window dressing;” they call for substantial societal system change. If one responds that that is not possible, I’m sure that *Shepard’s* response would be: We *have* no choice: if we want a decent life for ourselves and others—indeed, if we want life itself—we need to use our intellects to design a different society for ourselves. One modeled on the lives of our “primitive” ancestors—a way of life that (as Shepard’s list suggests) was far more sophisticated than most people realize. Shepard himself does not provide any sort of a “plan” for changing our society, but why should we expect *him* to have all of the answers?! He has contributed plenty with his insights into “primitive” life. It is for us, now, to “take the ball” and finish the task.

Keltner’s Kaleidoscope

The Dalai Lama is quoted in Dacher Keltner’s recent *Born to Be Good: The Science of a Meaningful Life*¹³² thusly:

If you want to be happy, practice compassion;
if you want others to be happy, practice compassion.

Keltner’s quotes this statement approvingly and, indeed, the last sentence in his book is (p. 269): “We are wired for good.” What he *means* by that, however, is that some of our biologically-based *reactions* tend to “push” us toward behaviors having the intention of helping others; and that in then engaging in those activities, we activate processes within our own bodies that we find pleasurable. But just because we are in this sense “wired for good,” it does not follow that all, or even most, of our actions have this intention; for many of our actions result from factors other than involuntary reactions—a fact not evident in the Dalai Lama’s statement. Nor is it a fact fully clear to Keltner, it would seem.

Let us, however, for the moment ignore these (apparent) deficiencies in the thinking of the Dalai Lama and Keltner, and focus just on the first part of the above paragraph—the fact that empirical research supports the view that we are “wired for good.” Let us also assume that “good” for us does not present ethical difficulties—that “good” behaviors are ones that contribute to the well-being of others, and leave it at that. The important fact about Keltner’s book is that it reports empirical findings, and does so under a series of headings (identified shortly).

Insofar as the empirical findings reported by Keltner pertain to well-being, one can react to them in two different ways—which are not, though, mutually exclusive:

¹³² New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2009, p. 249, Keltner is pictured with the Dalai Lama on p. 174.

- An *individualistic* reaction: “What behaviors can *I* engage in to increase my sense of well-being—my “happiness”?
- A *societal* reaction: “What *societal* changes can—and should—be made to increase the level of well-being in my society (or some other society)?”

Keltner recognizes that there are societal variations in “goodness”—e.g., his chart on p. 7 shows that a high level of trust exists in Norway¹³³ and China, a low level in the Philippines and Brazil—but his orientation—from a “use of research results” standpoint—seems to be clearly individualistic rather than societal. Thus, his orientation is of a “self-help” nature, and his book evinces no awareness of the difficulties in realizing his findings on a societal level. Whether Keltner chose this orientation as a means of increasing the sales of his book or just found it “natural” to use this orientation, I have no way of knowing. It *does*, however, represent a limitation of the book,¹³⁴ which is why the reader should be forewarned about this aspect of the book.

On the other hand, Keltner’s book has the virtue of suggesting that the well-being of an individual is not just dependent on the individual’s “situation” (something implicit in some of the writers previously discussed in this essay), but also on the individual’s *actions*—whether these are in response to certain reactions or are chosen. True, to a degree one is a prisoner of one’s situation, in that one’s situation places limitations on how one can act. Still, most of us have some ability to choose at least some of our actions, and in so doing can choose “good” actions—whether acting out of empathy (feeling the pain of another whom one can observe), sympathy (feeling the pain of those whose pain one has learned about—via reading, viewing television, etc.), or acting to bring about societal system change (a more intellectually-based sort of action). Thus, despite the fact that Keltner’s book has certain limitations, it also has certain strengths.

One of those strengths is that much of the research reported in this book is research undertaken by himself, or himself in conjunction with his students. (He is a Professor of Psychology at the University of California, Berkeley.) His research orientation was adopted while a student of Paul Ekman (noted for his research on facial expressions). And Ekman’s research, in turn, was stimulated by Charles Darwin’s *The Expression of The Emotions in Man and Animals*,¹³⁵ 1871.

An interesting feature of Keltner’s book is that he regards it as a contribution to (p. 3) “*jen* science”—the “*jen*” here being a Confucian concept: “*Jen* is the central idea in the teachings of

¹³³ Likely affected, however, by the dastardly recent actions by Anders Behring Breivik.

¹³⁴ It is important to note that individualistic thinking can easily lead to “blame the victim” thinking. Thus, those engaged in this sort of thinking should be aware of this danger.

¹³⁵ Available at <http://books.google.com/>.

Confucius, and refers to a complex mixture of kindness, humanity, and respect that transpires between people.” He adds (p. 5): “If I were given one metric to take the temperature of the social well-being of the individual, the marriage, a school, community, or culture, the *jen* ratio^[136] would be my choice.” And (p. 6): “New neuroscience suggests [that] we are wired for *jen*: When we give to others, or act cooperatively, reward centers of the brain (such as the nucleus accumbens, a region dense.” with dopamine receptors) human with activity. Giving may enhance self-interest more than receiving.”

Keltner asserts that (p. ix) “emotion is the source of the meaningful life.” And his book addresses three questions (pp. ix, x):

- “How can we be happy?”
- “What are the deep origins of our capacity for kindness?”
- “How can we be good?”

Keltner’s second question suggests that he will give an evolutionary account of our “capacity for kindness,” but the fact of the matter is that Keltner’s orientation is to empirical studies rather than speculation regarding the evolutionary mechanisms that have “given” us “kindness genes.” Keltner’s first and third questions are answered by him—using empirical findings as his basis—by arguing that if we are good, we will be happy, and that being good is not that difficult given that we are “programmed” to be good—a rather naïve statement.

Before indicating some of the findings of Keltner and his group, I feel it necessary to make two comments. First, although the book reports the results of a large number of empirical studies, it does so using a “self-help” perspective. Thus, the possibility that our problems are rooted in The Discrepancy, and will only be solved by either societal system change or drastic biological change is never considered.

Second, it must be noted that Keltner’s orientation is more to *reactions* (and the actions that result from them) than to *actions* resulting from advance planning. Thus, he has chapters on embarrassment, the smile, laughter, compassion, and awe; and although he also has chapters on teasing, touch, and love, the actions associated with teasing and touching are closely related to reactions; and love is a complex emotion, with associated actions—and Keltner’s discussion of love is not particularly satisfying anyway. My main point here, however, is that there are many behaviors beyond the ones discussed by Keltner, many of which are obstacles to the “good” that we were “born to be,” but those behaviors play no role in Keltner’s thinking. In other words,

¹³⁶ Here is how Keltner “computes” this ratio: (p. 4) “In the denominator of the *jen* ratio place recent actions in which someone has brought the bad in others to completion . . . Above this, in the numerator of the ration, tally up the actions that bring the good in others to completion . . .” What Keltner means by “good in others to completion” is not perfectly clear (to me).

there is an important “hole” in his thinking, seemingly reflective of the fact that his orientation is to empirical research.

Despite these shortcomings, Keltner’s book is an important one, and below I give what I regard as some of the most important statements made in the book, organized on the basis of Keltner’s chapter headings.

Survival of the Kindest

- (P. 55) “Our evolved tendencies toward goodness, [Charles] Darwin proposed [in *The Descent of Man, and Selection in Relation to Sex*,¹³⁷ 1871], are performed with the automatic, well-honed speed of . . . [certain] reflexes—the flinch of the body at a loud, unexpected sound, the grasping reflex of the young infant. They are stronger than those toward self-preservation, the default orientation of timid [as a species] men [i.e., humans].”
- (Pp. 55 – 56) The EEA (environment of evolutionary adaptedness) “is an abstract description of the social and physical environment in which the human species evolved. It is within this environment that certain genetically based traits—for example, to avoid foods with foul odors that signal decay, to respond with charm and sexual readiness when a female is ovulating—led to greater success in the games of survival and reproduction, and became encoded into the human genome, while others led to increased probabilities of fatality and cold shoulders from potential mates, and quickly to the scrap heap of evolution.”
- (P. 60) “Caregiving is a way of life in humans, and has been wired into our nervous system in the forms of emotions, such sympathy and filial love.”
- (P. 63) “. . . humans developed several forms of social communication—for example, gossip—by which low-status individuals can comment upon and determine the status of other group members.”
- (P. 66) “Our hominid predecessors were dependent upon one another to defend against predators, hunt, reproduce, and ensure that offspring reached the age of viability and reproduction. Individuals who were better able to negotiate conflicts almost certainly fared better in the tasks of survival and gene replication.”

¹³⁷ Available online at
http://books.google.com/books?id=ofp77PAqxBsC&printsec=frontcover&dq=the+descent+of+man+by+charles+darwin&source=bll&ots=qI2Vm18n7j&sig=StD2dCsdd0Is-awp_Odach9sqRc&hl=en&ei=cmwTcKtLMrZgAf6psX4Cw&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=11&ved=0CHeQ6AEwCg#v=onepage&q=f=false

- (P. 67) The “social environment of the EEA would be defined by an acute tendency to care, by highly coordinated, face-to-face social exchanges, by the need to reconcile and the flattening of social hierarchies, by perpetually negotiated conflicts of interests, and by the emergence of the tendency toward sexual monogamy. It is these properties of our early social existence that gave rise to the moral emotions . . .”
- (P. 73) “We have learned that emotions serve as commitment devices, are embodied in our bodies, and shape moral judgment in systematic fashion.”

Embarrassment

- (P. 76) Keltner’s research has led him to conclude that the “elements of embarrassment are the visible signals of an evolved force that brings people together during conflict and after breeches of the social contract, when relations are adrift, and aggressive inclinations [are] perilously on the rise.”
- (P. 79) “The startle response involves seven actions: a blink, cheek tighten, furrowed brow, lip stretch, neck tighten, and shoulder and head flinch, which blaze by in a 250-millisecond blur.” “As it turns out, the magnitude of the 250-millisecond startle response is a telling indicator of a person’s temperament, and in particular of the extent to which the person is anxious, reactive, and vigilant to threat and danger.”
- (P. 83) “Emotional display are brief . . . because of the pressing needs facial expressions are attuned to—the approaching predator, the child catapulting toward danger, the flickering signs of interest shown by a potential mate among many suitors. Involuntary displays of emotions have different temporal dynamics than nonemotional displays: They are gradual in their onset and offset. More voluntary displays . . . can come on the fast in milliseconds, and remain on the face for minutes, hours, days, or for some regrettable souls, a lifetime.”
- (P. 85) “Food sharing [via a mother who has pregestated food in her mouth to make it digestable for her young, transmitting the food by mouth to her young] . . . is the original evolutionary context of the kiss.”
- (P. 86) Embarrassment “is a display that reconciles, that brings people together in contexts of distance and likely aggression.”
- (P. 87) “At the heart of the embarrassment display . . . is weakness, humility, and modesty.”
- (P. 87) “The embarrassed smile has a simple story with a subtle twist. The smile originates in the fear grimace or bared-teeth grin of nonhuman primates.”

- (P. 87) Humans “show signs of affection—subtle lip puckers—in our embarrassment, to warm hearts and bring others closer. This explains why embarrassment displays and the coy smile are put to good use during flirtation and courtship.”
- (P. 88) “The absence of embarrassment is a sign of abandoning the social contract.”
- (P. 89) “Embarrassment reveals how much the individual cares about the rules that bind us to one another. Gaze aversion, head turns to the side and down, the coy smile, and the occasional face touch are perhaps the most potent nonverbal clues we have to an individual’s commitment to the moral order.”
- (P. 94) “Embarrassment warns us of immoral acts and prevents us from mistakes that unsettle social harmony.”
- (P. 95) “Embarrassment is like an ocean wave: It throws you and those near you into the earth, but you come up embracing and laughing.”
- (P. 95) “We quickly extricate embarrassed souls from their momentary predicaments with deflections of attention or face-saving parodies of the mishap [that caused the embarrassment].”

Smile

- (P. 99) “In evolution’s toolbox of adaptations that promote cooperation, the smile is perhaps the most potent tool.” “It triggers . . . activation in reward centers of the brain. It soothes the stress-related physiology of smiler and perceiver alike. The smile smoothes the rough edges of our social life, creating a medium of benevolent exchange. The right kind of smile brings the good in others to completion.”
- (P. 101) Primate Signe Preuschoft has found that the smile and the laugh “occur in much different contexts, and toward much different ends. The smile and the laugh originate in distinct slices of early primate life, and have consequently followed separate trajectories as they worked their way into the human repertoire and our nervous systems.”
- (P. 102) “Across species, primates resort to the silent bared-teeth display to appease and to signal submissiveness, weakness, and social fear in contexts in which the likelihood of conflict and aggression is high . . .” “In humans, the silent bared-teeth display is evident in our deferential smile, which signals thoughtful, at times fearful, attention to the concerns of others . . .”
- (P. 103) “The smile emerged to facilitate cooperative and affiliative proximity. The laugh [on the other hand] emerged to promote play and levity.”

- (P. 104) Sociologist Arlie Hochschild “has argued that this smile [i.e., the “service industry smile”] is part of the emotional labor required of so many service-oriented jobs and the tip of the iceberg of alienation from the fruits of human labor.” “Service industry jobs [Ann Kring—a colleague of Keltner—has concluded] produce a form of schizophrenia.”
- (P. 105) Paul “Ekman has called smiles that involve the activation of the zygomatic major muscle and the orbicularis oculi [the “happiness muscle”] the Duchenne or D smile, in honor of the French neuroanatomist Guillaume Benjamin Amand Duchenne (1806 – 1875), who first discovered the visible traces of the activity of orbicularis oculi.”
- (P. 110) “In a smile-impoverished environment, the young child no longer explores the environment, no longer approaches novel toys or play structures; her imagination shuts down.”
- (P. 111) The D smiles “which punctuate our daily interactions—between parents and children, flirting strangers, friends sharing a silent moment of satirical commentary upon an acquaintance—are like social chocolate.”
- (P. 111) Barbara Frederickson and Robert Levenson have found “that when people emit D smiles when experiencing stress, their level of cardiovascular arousal quickly moves to a more quiescent baseline.
- (P.112) Richard Depue and Jeannine Morrone-Strupinsky believe “that perceiving smiles in others, most likely of the Duchenne variety, triggers the release of the neurotransmitter dopamine, which facilitates friendly approach and affiliation.” “Smiles catapult individuals toward one another, and in the more intimate space produced by mutual smiles a more proximal set of behaviors—touch and soothing vocalizations—kick into action, soothing, calming, and triggering the release of opiates, which bring about powerful feelings of warmth, calmness, and intimacy.”
- (P. 115) In a study that Keltner did with LeeAnne Harker, they found that “Warm D smiles promote high *jen* ratios and the meaningful life.” “The strong D smilers . . . reported feeling more connected to those around them; the smile helps trigger greater trust and intimacy with others.”
- (P. 121) “With the rise of primate equality, the silent bared-teeth display became freed from its one-to-one mapping to fear and submissiveness, and was extended into new social contexts that promote affectionate cooperation and affiliation.” “In our primate evolution, the D smile was the first vocabulary of friendly intent and affection, in particular between near-equals.”

Laughter

- (P. 124) “The laugh might rightfully lay claim to the status of tool-making, agriculture, the opposable thumb, self-representation, imitation, the domestication of animals, upright gait, and symbolic language—an evolutionary signature of a great shift in our social organization, accomplished by shifts in our nervous system.”
- (P. 127) “. . . nearly all laughter . . . is social.” “Laughter is contagious. Laughter spreads to others. It washes over them, sticks in people like darts, it fills rooms with a certain quality, it prompts others to begin laughing for no reason intelligible to the conscious mind.”
- (P. 130) Robert “Provine has found that women tend to laugh more than men, and [Jo-Anne] Bachorowski’s work ups the gender ante: Men, pitiful apes that they are, are much more likely to snort and grunt than women.”
- (P. 131) “In light of Bachorowski’s discoveries, it is now assumed that laughter preceded language in human evolution, emerging in early protohuman form some four million years ago.”
- (P. 133) Robert “Provine found that laughter followed all sorts of utterances. Over 80 percent of the laughs [observed in his research] did not occur in response to humor.
- (P. 134) “In an insightful analysis, Bachorowski and [Michael] Owren argue that laughter builds cooperative bonds vital to group living. It does so through two mechanisms. The first is contagion.” Second, “Laughter rewards mutually beneficial exchanges—successful collaborations at work, in the kitchen, in child rearing, with friends.”
- (P. 135) Laughs “become unique rewards of cooperative exchange, building trust between individuals.” It “is also a rich social signal that has evolved within play interactions—tickling, roughhousing, banter—to evoke cooperative responses in others.”
- (P. 135) Jean Gottman has found that “For couples who divorced on average 13.9 years after they were married, it was the absence of laughter that predicted the end of their bond.”
- (P. 137) Laughter “indicates that alternatives to reality are possible, it is an invitation to enter into the world of pretense, it is a suspension of the demands of literal meaning and more formal social exchange. Laughter is a ticket to travel to the landscape of the human imagination.”

- (P. 138) “In the freedom of pretend play, children learn that there are multiple perspectives upon objects, actions, and identities.” “Laughter is a portal to the world of pretense, play, and imagination; it is an invitation to a nonliteral world where the truths of identities, objects, and relations are momentarily suspended, and alternatives are willingly entertained. Those hours of pretend play . . . are the gateway to empathy and the moral imagination.”
- (P. 139) “The laugh . . . signals the suspension of formal, sincere meaning.”
- (P. 140) “Laughter provides a brief vacation from the existential impossibilities, the deep sadness, the disorienting anxieties, of losing a loved one, or losing a city or way of life.”
- (P. 143) “A laugh is a lightning bolt of wisdom, a moment in which the individual steps back and gains a broader perspective upon their lives and the human condition.”
- (P. 145) “Laughter may just be the first step to nirvana. When people laugh, they are enjoying a vacation from the conflicts of social living.”

Tease

- (P. 147) “The importance of provocation and teasing in our social evolution is suggested by how pervasive teasing is in the animal world.”
- (P. 148) “In contrast [to bullying], teasing is a mode of play, no doubt with a sharp edge, in which we provoke others. We turn to the playful provocation of teasing to negotiate the ambiguities of social living—establishing hierarchies, testing commitments to social norms, uncovering potential romantic interest, negotiating conflicts over work and resources.”
- (Pp. 149 - 150) During the Middle Ages and the early Renaissance, “Jesters pointed to alternatives to the status quo. They reversed reality, turning conventional wisdom on its head. They often did so on behalf of the downtrodden and poor (and in fact, political pamphlets were developed out of some jesters’ activities).”
- (P. 151) “The tease seeks to stimulate the recipient’s emotional system, to reveal the individual’s social commitments.”
- (P. 153) “. . . teasing and politeness are surprisingly close relatives.”
- (P. 154) “We tease by imitating, in exaggerated form, the mannerisms of others . . .”

- (P. 155) “When done with a light touch and style, teasing is a game, a dramatic performance, one filled with shared laughter that transforms conflicts—between rivals in a hierarchy, romantic partners, siblings finding separate spaces—into playful negotiations.”
- (P. 157) “In humans, teasing can be thought of as the stag’s roar or the frog’s croak—a ritualized, symbolic means by which group members negotiate rank.”
- (P. 163) “There is no relation more vital to the survival of our species than the intimate bond. There is no relationship more fraught with conflict or more fragile.”
- (P. 164) We “turn to teasing to solve many problems of intimate life. We tease to flirt, to discover others’ affections and sexual interests.
- (P. 167) “Children have an instinct for teasing.” “As with adults, teasing can instigate and mark deep friendship. At the same time, teasing can go horribly awry.”

Touch

- (Pp. 177 - 178) “The scientific study of touch reveals the tactile modality to be an ideal medium in which individuals spread goodness to others.” “Touch triggers biochemical reactions in the recipient—activation of the orbitofrontal cortex and deactivation of the amygdala, reduced stress-related cardiovascular response, and increased neurochemicals like oxytocin—all of which promote trust and goodwill between individuals. Touch, my studies show, is the primary language of compassion, love, and gratitude—emotions at the heart of trust and cooperation.”
- (P. 180) “Scientists have learned that touch is a basic reward, as potent as the sweetest summer peaches or the scent of blooming jasmine.”
- (P. 181) “Touch (the right kind, of course) is as powerful and immediate a reward as chocolate or the scent of Mother to an infant.”
- (P. 181) The “act of touching is physiologically rewarding for the toucher [as well as the touchee].”
- (P. 183) “Touch alters not only our stress-related physiology but the development of the underlying physiological systems that render the human stress response more labile and strong.”
- (P. 185) “Touch is woven into our daily exchanges. Pats on the back, handshakes, hands resting on shoulders and arms, and playful nudges are barely noticed as we move through

the day. Yet these touches alter others' nervous systems toward patterns of activation more conducive to higher *jen* ratios.”

- (P. 187) “The right touch . . . creates trust and long-term cooperative exchange. Through its rewarding features, touch can be a glue of trading relations between kith and kin.”
- (P. 188) “It is not a coincidence that greeting rituals around the world systematically involve touch.” “Touching and trusting go hand in hand.”
- (P. 193) “Sympathy and gratitude are central players in the social contract, motivating actions in the service of others.” The emotions associated with touching “have been honed by thousands of generations of hominid evolution, so that today, with a simple touch to the forearm, the receiver of the touch can discern sympathy from gratitude from love.”
- (P. 195) “We live in a touch-deprived culture.”
- (P. 195) “The need to touch is hidden in various cultural forms: manicures, pedicures, haircuts, and, I would wager, a rate of visits to medical doctors that would startle insurance companies.”

Love

- (Pp. 201 – 201) The case of Victor—the Wild Boy of Aveyron—is discussed, one of 35 documented cases of feral children. Such children have somehow survived in the absence of parental care, and have therefore not developed as recognizable humans. It has long been recognized “that the love between parent and child is the foundation of human mind, character, and culture.” (Meaning that even if a child is gifted genetically, that child will not develop normally if not provided with loving care from birth—a point emphasized by Jean Liedloff; see Part I of this essay.)
- (P. 212) “Evolution’s answer to the commitment problem is that emotion most favored by poets and rock stars alike: romantic love.”
- (P. 212 - 213) “Not too surprisingly, long-term committed romantic love is associated with activation in reward centers in the brain—the ventral anterior cingulate, the medial insula, the caudate and the putamen. More dramatically, romantic love deactivates threat detection regions of the brain—the right prefrontal cortical regions and the amygdala.”
- (P. 213) “By activating touch and a calmer physiological state, oxytocin enables monogamous pair-bonding.”

- (P. 222) In humans, “loving relationships (of any kind) lead to less depression and anxiety, greater happiness, more ruddy health, a more robust nervous system, and greater resistance to disease (not to mention it just feels good).”
- (P. 224) Romantic love “does not live on passion alone. It requires many other positive emotions—laughter, play, a sense of wonder, kindness, forgiveness—to arrive at that magic ratio of five positive feelings for every toxic negative one that enables marriages, in John Gottman’s wisdom, to endure.”
- (P. 224) The “love of humanity, agape, really a love of all sentient beings This feeling is the central discovery—the heart, so to speak, of ethical systems ranging from Tibetan Buddhism to major strands of Christianity. It is a love that generates trust, generosity, and stable communities.” “It may be the clue toward beating things like global warming.”

Compassion

- (P. 226) “The content of the mind shifts between the press of self-interest and the push of compassion.”
- (P. 227) “Thomas Huxley argued that evolution [assumed by him to involve a “struggle for existence”] did not produce a biologically based capacity to care; instead, kindness, cooperation, and compassion are cultural creations, constructed within religious commandments and rituals, in norms governing public exchange, codified in social organizations, as desperate attempts to rein in, to countervail man’s base tendencies.”
- (P. 227) “The trend in Western thought has been to argue that compassion is an unreliable guide to ethical behavior Compassion is ‘blind’ [it has been held], too subjective to be a universal guide to the conscience and ethical conduct.”
- (P. 228) “Compassion is a biologically based emotion rooted deep in the mammalian brain, and shaped by perhaps the most potent selection pressures humans evolved to adapt to—the need to care for the vulnerable. Compassion is anything but blind; it is finely attuned to vulnerability. It is anything but weak; it fosters courageous, altruistic actions often at significant cost to the self.”
- (P. 228) Physiological psychologist “Steve Porges has made the case that the vagus nerve [illustrated on p. 229] is the nerve of compassion, the body’s caretaking organ.”
- (P. 230) The “vagus nerve is unique to mammals.” “. . . as caretaking began to define a new class of species—mammals—a region of the nervous system, the vagus nerve, emerged evolutionarily to help support this new category of behavior.”

- (P. 232) “Humans are wired to respond to harm from the first moments of life.”
- (P. 234) A study by Chris Oveis found that “brief exposure to images of harm triggered activation of the vagus nerve more so than images that made participants proud.” Participants’ “experiences of compassion and pride were . . [both] quite sensitive to fluctuations in the activity of the vagus nerve.”
- (P. 234) When one feels compassion, this shifts one’s “sense of similarity to others—a potent enabler of altruistic action. Philosopher Peter Singer has argued that this sense of similarity, or circle of care, is a core ethical principle that emerged as part of the evolution of the ethical mind.” “This expanding circle of care gives rise to a belief in equality, to the extension of individual rights to others.”
- (P. 235) Research by Keltner and Oveis established “that pride made people feel more similar to the strong, resource-rich groups [of those in the study] . . .” “Compassion, on the other hand, made people feel more similar to the vulnerable groups—the homeless, the ill, the elderly . . .” “Compassion is anything but blind or biased by subjective concerns; it is exquisitely attuned to those in need.”
- (P. 235) Altruistic behavior is at times motivated by “selfishness”—e.g., “to reduce the distress we ourselves feel at the sight of another person suffering . . .” But David Batson maintains that “there is an other-oriented state that can be the wellspring of altruistic behavior: compassion.”
- (Pp. 239 – 240) “It is an active concern for others, and not a simple mirroring of others’ suffering, that is the fount of compassion, and that leads to altruistic ends.”
- (P. 241) “If the vagus nerve is a caretaking organ, then one would expect individuals with elevated vagus nerve activity to enjoy rich networks of social connection, to show highly responsive caretaking behavior, and for compassion to be at the center of their emotional lives.” Research by Keltner and Oveis established that those “with elevated vagus nerve activity in a resting state . . . reported elevated levels of the trait extraversion . . . and agreeableness . . . People with elevated baseline vagal tone also reported more optimism, general positive mood, and better physical health seven months later.”
- (P. 242) “Perhaps most dramatically, we found that the vagal superstars showed an increased propensity for transformative experiences of the sacred.”
- (P. 242) “Elevated vagus nerve activity . . . orients the individual to a life of greater warmth and social connection.”

- (P. 245) “The most important criterion for females and males alike in their search for love, an overwhelming universal across . . . thirty-seven countries surveyed, is kindness.”
- (P. 246) So “important was the capacity to care to the survival of our species that new data suggest that we have been wired to identify the trustworthy and reliable caretakers among us, and preferentially trust, and give resources to, those vagal superstars.”
- (P. 248) “Recent neuroscientific evidence suggests that the regions of the brain that enable compassion—portions of the frontal lobes involved in empathy and perspective taking—continue to develop in to the twenties. Compassion can be cultivated.”
- (P. 249) “Recent scientific studies are identifying the kinds of environments that cultivate compassion. This moral emotion is cultivated in environments where parents are responsive, and play, and touch their children.” Etc.
- (P. 249) “In the words of the Dalai Lama: ‘If you want to be happy, practice compassion; if you want others to be happy, practice compassion.’” “Ironcially enough, compassion may be a prerequisite to the pursuit of self-interested happiness.”

Awe

- (P. 252) John Muir’s [¹³⁸] “experiences of wonder and awe are examples of emotions designed to enable people to fold cooperatively into complex social groups, to quiet the voice of self-interest, and to feel a sense of reverence for the collective.” (P. 251 “. . . Muir founded the Sierra Club in 1892 and served as its first president until his dying day.”)
- (P. 254) “Awe is not restricted to experiences of the divine; it is an emotion of expanded thought and greatness of mind that is produced by literature, poetry, painting, viewing landscapes, and a variety of everyday perceptual experiences.”
- (P. 254) “Obscure images in painting are more likely to produce sublime feelings (Monet) than those that are more clearly rendered (Pissarro). Despotic governments keep their leader obscure from the populace to enhance that leader’s capacity to evoke awe.”
- (P. 255) “Prototypical experiences of awe involve perceived vastness, anything that is experienced as being much larger than the self or the self’s typical frame of reference.”

¹³⁸ Muir [1838 – 1914] was born in Scotland, but in 1849 his family moved to the United States, and began farming near Portage, Wisconsin. ‘Portage’ has that name because in that area the Wisconsin River flows south, and a short distance away the Fox River flows north—enabling a fairly easy transfer from one river to the other one.

- (P. 256) “Encounters with extraordinary virtue will trigger the feeling of elevation, an emotional response to ‘moral beauty’ or human goodness.”
- (P. 258) “Awe is triggered by experiences with that which is beyond our control and understanding—that which is vast and requires accommodation.”
- (P. 259) Per Paul Woodruff, reverence “is grounded in a sense of unity and a feeling of common humanity.”
- (P. 259) Awe “produces a state of reverence, a feeling of respect and gratitude for the things that are given. Rituals build upon this feeling of reverence—we revere birth, we give thanks for food, we honor those who marry, we pay homage to the dead.”
- (P. 259) “In our hominid predecessors awe first began to occur in the emotional dynamics of collective action—for example in collective defense, in coordinated hunting, in the rapid response to storms, in the mobilization required at the sound of a herd. In these kinds of collective actions, early hominids felt surges of physical power and connection to their kith and kin.”
- (P. 260) Given that which produces feelings of awe, awe is difficult to study scientifically.
- (P. 266) It appears that “awe, compassion, and pride are not reducible to sensory pleasure; that there is more to good feeling and pleasure than self-interested rewards.”
- (P. 267) In a study by Emiliana Simon-Thomas and Keltner involving slides, “The awe slides activated the left orbitofrontal cortex. This region lights up when we are physically touched, and when we anticipate rewards. It is centrally involved in approach and goal-directed action>
- (P. 267) “In its ultimate origins in evolution, the sacred is social. Our capacity for wonder and reverence is rooted in the body.”
- (P. 268) “The experience of awe is about finding your place in the larger scheme of things.”
- (P. 269) “Evolution has produced a mind that evolves toward an appreciation of the vastness of our collective design, and emotions enable us to enact these loftier notions. We are wired for good.”

Concluding Remarks

Brilliant intellectual Noam Chomsky, in his recent “Is the World Too Big to Fail? The Contours of Global Order,”¹³⁹ stated the following, with brutal honesty:

I do not want to end without mentioning another externality that is dismissed in market systems: the fate of the species. Systemic risk in the financial system can be remedied by the taxpayer, but no one will come to the rescue if the environment is destroyed. That it must be destroyed is close to an institutional imperative. Business leaders who are conducting propaganda campaigns to convince the population that anthropogenic global warming is a liberal hoax understand full well how grave is the threat, but they must maximize short-term profit and market share. If they don't, someone else will.

This vicious cycle could well turn out to be lethal. To see how grave the danger is, simply have a look at the new Congress in the U.S., propelled into power by business funding and propaganda. Almost all are climate deniers. They have already begun to cut funding for measures that might mitigate environmental catastrophe. Worse, some are true believers; for example, the new head of a subcommittee on the environment who explained that global warming cannot be a problem because God promised Noah that there will not be another flood.

And a recent article by Mark Ames and Mike Elk (“Big Brothers: Thought Control at Koch”¹⁴⁰ noted:

On the eve of the November [2010] midterm elections, Koch Industries sent an urgent letter to most of its 50,000 employees advising them on whom to vote for and warning them about the dire consequences to their families, their jobs and their country should they choose to vote otherwise.

The facts that (1) we have a ruling class (which, as Chomsky notes, rules the world, and does so ruthlessly—despite what the popular press implies), that ruling class (2) is “possessed” by market ideas (with some of its fringe members “possessed” by “Christian fundamentalist” ideas), and that ruling class (3) not only “owns” our government officials, but is also (4) increasingly “buying” voters (by bombarding the public with propaganda), gives one little reason to have any degree of hope for the human future. And—frankly—I *have* little hope, my only consolation being that at 71 years of age I will not be living much longer.

I am not without hope, however, my hope coming from the Structured Interaction Group (discussed in Chapter 7)—a private institution that, I believe, has potential for generating creative ideas, and thereby activating its participants to act on those ideas. Insofar as those ideas are of a “salvific” nature, and those ideas are acted upon, there is some measure of hope for our species. Otherwise, I see no reason to have hope.

¹³⁹ At http://www.tomdispatch.com/post/175382/tomgram%3A_noam_chomsky%2C_who_owns_the_world/

¹⁴⁰ At <http://www.thenation.com/signup/160062?destination=article/160062/big-brothers-thought-control-koch>.

Let there, then, be a proliferation of Structured Interaction Groups! The fact that support for “free market” capitalism¹⁴¹ has been on the decline in this country gives me some hope that this might occur.

¹⁴¹ At http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2011/04/07/us-china-brazil-free-market-support_n_846169.html.

Chapter 4. Human Design Specifications: My Views

In concluding my discussion of “design specifications” I would like to my own views regarding our needs as humans. I believe that a relatively short list is desirable for three reasons. First, a lengthy list such as that provided by Shepard tends to be too overwhelming to consider seriously;¹⁴² a list of about a dozen is much more manageable for the mind to deal with. Second, given that I conceive their use in planning by a small group, a short list has the advantage that it lends itself more readily for use by a small group. Third, a short list has the advantage of flexibility; i.e., one group may “operationalize” them in one way, and another group in a quite different way. I see no problem with this, as every individual is unique, so that it should not be surprising that one group would arrive at a certain consensus, while another one would arrive at a rather different one. Although I am perfectly willing to suggest a given set of goals to a given group, I feel no need to dictate to the group how they choose to *act* on those goals. After all, the plans developed by a group are most likely to “work” if the members of the group have themselves developed the plans, with a minimal amount of guidance.

Below, then, I offer two perspectives on human design specifications, the first one using the language of “needs.”

Perspective One

- The human species is one of those species that falls into the category “social.” Indeed, not only do most humans have an innate *desire* to be with other humans; they have a *need* so to be: if, upon birth, one is abandoned, one is likely to die within a few days, even if not killed by a predator; if one is provided care by members of another species (a rare, but not unknown, occurrence) one will not develop into a recognizably human being but, rather, will become a “feral” being.
- Humans have a need to be a part of a small group—e.g., one no more than about 500 persons in size. (See, e.g., Kirkpatrick Sale’s *Human Scale*¹⁴³—a huge book on the virtues of smallness!.) A “group” here should be understood as not merely a collection of individuals (i.e., a group in a *statistical* sense) but, rather, a set of individuals who interact one with another (i.e., a *sociological* group)—so that each person knows virtually all other members of the group.
- It is not enough (for a high level of well-being) simply to be a member of a small group, however. Harmonious relationships must characterize the group. This does not mean that all interactions within the group are conflict-free; it *does* mean, however, that when

¹⁴² Not that I regret having presented the Shepard list, however (or all of the Keltner quotes)!

¹⁴³ New York: Coward, McCann & Geoghegan, 1980.

conflicts arise, that fact is of concern to other members of the group—who then “naturally” act to defuse the conflict. That is, there is unconscious “recognition” within the group that all have a stake in harmonious relationships, so that the social fabric must not be allowed to become torn. Given this perception of conflict, when offenses occur, the point becomes to re-integrate the offender into the societal system again rather than inflict punishment—although at times that (and even banishment) may be called for.

- Healthy interaction involves such activities as conversing with others as equals (and in a manner such that individual views are welcomed and respected—rather than treated as, e.g., “heretical”); working together with others to provide sustenance (or other) needs; recreating together; and participating in certain rituals or ceremonies together.
- We humans are “designed” for physical activity, and must have a certain amount of it for good physical and mental health. Physical activity can be associated not only with work, but also play—and includes sexual activity. The latter, of course, will tend to be more strictly guided by mores established by the group than the other activities.
- In working with others one must feel that one is making a contribution to the group—that one is not a “slacker.” Conversely, one must perceive *others* in the group as at least attempting to make a contribution to the group.
- Related to this point, however: one must feel that one’s contribution is one that “fits” one—in terms of one’s abilities, interests, etc.
- In addition, one should have an opportunity to develop one’s abilities, but come to realize that one has an obligation to use one’s abilities for the benefit of others—others within the group, as well as others beyond the borders of the group. Included in this use of one’s abilities to help others is helping others to develop *their* abilities (i.e., acting as a “mentor”).
- In acting as an individual, one must feel that one is a decision-maker, not just acting out of blind habit or doing the bidding of others. (See, e.g., Elizabeth Boyden Howes and Sheila Moon, *Man [sic] the Choicemaker*¹⁴⁴) One mark of a healthy interactional situation, in fact, is that all members of the group perceive (if but unconsciously) themselves this way, and feel that they have the respect of other members of the group.
- Members of a community would be valued as *persons* rather than as *producers*. A guiding principle accepted by members is that much is expected from those to whom much has been given (Luke 12:48)—a principle that turns the “law” of supply and

¹⁴⁴ Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press, 1973.

demand on its head. A principle that asks people to think not in terms of what they deserve, but what they are *able* to do—and therefore *should* do—to contribute to the well-being of others.

- A need for extended periods of close contact with the “surround”—a point developed several years ago by noted scientist Edward O. Wilson (*Biophilia*¹⁴⁵). Especially important is spending some of that time in solitude.
- I would hypothesize a need for adventure. Given that our existing way of life provides little in the way of adventure—and that individuals often feel that they must invent adventuresome activities for themselves—I would also hypothesize that some members of our society would be attracted to the “program” that I advocate (in a later paper) for that reason alone. If they feel “driven” by this motive rather than an interest in the well-being of their fellows—and the survival of our species—they would still be welcomed into the Movement, for some such individuals could prove to be an important asset for the Movement.
- In addition, however (and to develop somewhat a point alluded to above), I would like to make reference to Matthew 25 here—with its commands that we feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, etc. What this passage reminds us is that we moderns live in societies that are very unlike “primitive” ones in that many in our midst are lacking in their basic needs—to say nothing of psychological and sociological needs. On the one hand we should feel that we have an obligation to tend to the needs of others, not just “Number One,” but look at this not so much as an obligation as a privilege. For although the “love” command common to the various religions ostensibly has its focus on the “other,” the activities that one engages in related to that “command” can be expected to have a “rebound” effect. One will, on the one hand, feel good about oneself, but also by treating others well they will show appreciation for what you have done. Thus, the giver is also a receiver—and may end up receiving far more than s/he has given. So much of our happiness in life comes from our interactions with others—if, that is, we treat others well, and “minister” to their needs when such is necessary.
- Finally, it is not enough to think in terms of “needs,” “design specifications.” Biological imperatives are important, but the Good Society should go beyond such imperatives and insist that the members of the society have, ideally, such *personal* traits as the following:
 - Truthful
 - Loyal

¹⁴⁵ Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984.

- Courageous (in doing certain things, at any rate¹⁴⁶)
- With self-control
- Respectful
- Honest
- Helpful
- With a sense of humor
- Content with little in the way of possessions
- Open-minded
- Considerate
- Not a “striving” person (for wealth, fame, power, etc.)
- Responsible
- Energetic
- Trustworthy
- Modest/Humble

The Good Society should be structured in such a way that such (“boy scoutish”!) traits are developed “naturally” by the society’s members.

The above discussion, then, should provide those interested in initiating and/or participating in a Structured Interaction Group (SIG)—discussed in Chapter 7—with an abundance of ideas to “chew on.” Not that the participants should feel obligated to devote their discussions just to building the New Society: A given Leader—the one charged with initiating the discussion, and thereby setting its “tone”—should feel free to speak about whatever s/he feels “led” to talk about. I would hope, however, that enough SIGs are formed, and enough discussions are devoted to New Society questions, that some good ideas are developed, and those ideas are then publicized

¹⁴⁶ The Vikings had a reputation for being courageous, but in contexts that we moderns lack approval for. For an article of relevance see Christina von Noicken, “Egil Skallogrimsson and the Viking Ideal.” See <http://fathom.lib.uchicago.edu/1/77777122294/>.

and worked upon. There is no guarantee that we humans can escape extinction before the century is out, but if we simply sit back and do nothing, our chances of survival are small indeed.

Perspective Two

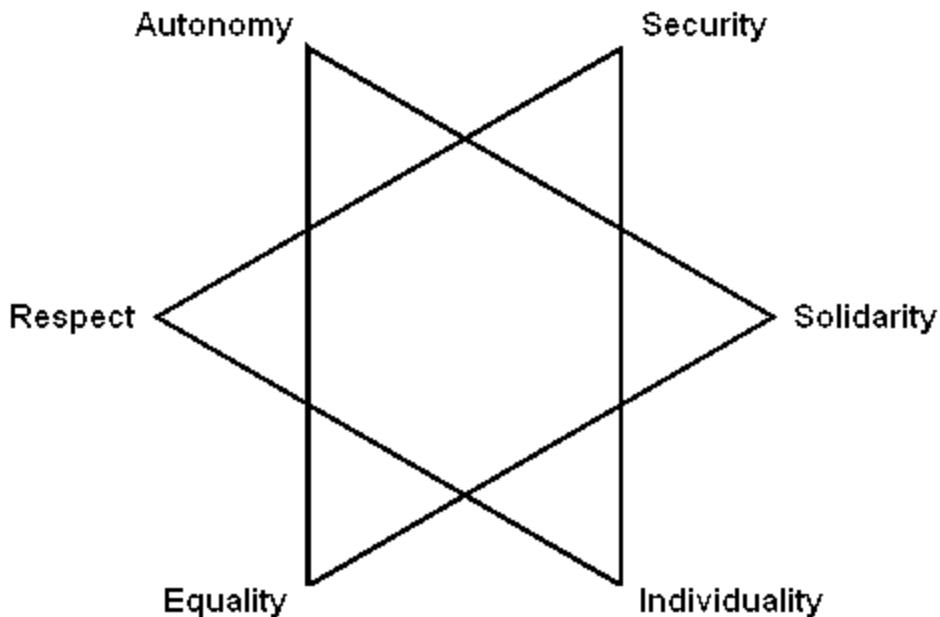
In introducing my second set of ideas, let me begin by noting that the *idea* of a “better” society precedes Thomas More’s *Utopia* (1516)¹⁴⁷ by centuries, of course, going at least back to Plato’s [c428 – 348 BCE] *Republic* [c380 BCE]. In that book (written in the form of a dialogue, featuring Socrates [c469 – 399] as the main speaker), the characters discuss justice, and whether happiness is associated with acting justly or, rather, unjustly; and rule by a philosopher-king is advocated. Since that time numerous other works have been written¹⁴⁸ that present other ideas regarding the “better” society, but I make no effort here to comment further on such works. Rather, I would simply like to note that “utopia” has come to be associated with “impractical,” and for that reason I avoid use of that word here. It seems clear to me—and is at least *sensed* by many in our society—that our society could use a good dose of improvement. And although I am writing just a few years after the midterm elections—when many in our society (naively) placed their hope in political candidates—I am writing for those who are able to see beyond the superficialities of partisan politics to more fundamental issues.

What are those issues? Different individuals are likely to arrive at different items on their lists, and might prioritize their items differently, but my starting point here is to identify six (6) goals for the “Better”—or “Good,” if you will—society, and to present them in conjunction with a 6-pointed star. I make this association for two reasons. First, it calls to mind the Star of David associated with Judaism: although I am not myself Jewish, I have great admiration for Hebrew Scripture—the Law books and books of the prophets, in particular. I have, however, oriented my star differently than that of the Star of David to make clear that it is *not* a Star of David. Second, use of a star figure helps convey the suggestion that the six “goals” are related one to another.

Given that with a 6-sided star a given point has a matching point opposite to it, one can think of the meaning attached to a particular point as being *paired* with the goal associated with the opposite end. Not that one needs to think of the two parts of a given pair as being *opposites* in a conventional sense; they may, or they may not, be—the point (no pun intended, of course!) being that the members of a given pair are perhaps more related to one another than each is to any of the other four goals referenced on the figure.

¹⁴⁷ See <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Utopia>.

¹⁴⁸ See, e.g., the massive Frank E. Manuel and Fritzie P. Manuel, *Utopian Thought in the Western World*. Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1979.



As the figure above indicates, the six goals that I would now identify for the “Better” Society are (in no particular order of importance): autonomy, security, solidarity, individuality, equality, and respect. And note how I have paired these goals: autonomy with individuality, respect with solidarity, and equality with security. In commenting on these six goals, I first comment on each as an individual goal, and then comment on the two components of each of the three pairs.

- *Autonomy* is both an objective condition and a feeling. It refers to an ability to make—or at least participate “significantly” in—decisions that affect oneself (and one’s dependents). At present, in our society, I would guess that many feel that they lack autonomy, and are not convinced that voting will make that feeling disappear. Many, I suspect, feel like puppets, with the strings being pulled by the managers-owners of large corporations—working either as agents of those corporations or through government agencies under their control (which they likely think of as including *all* of them!).
- *Security* is also both an objective condition and a feeling. It refers to having one’s physical needs met, along with one’s need for a certain amount of comfort. And it also refers to the possibility that one will not be attacked physically (or otherwise be in danger) while one is either in one’s home or “out in the world.”
- Insofar as *Solidarity* is a concept that refers to individuals, it is a feeling that one has relative to other people. If one has a sense of solidarity with others, one feels that one is “on the same page” with them in accepting certain principles for living, and because of that feeling of affinity with others one will be willing to “lend a hand” to others—especially those who one perceives as “on the same page” as oneself. And if one is,

oneself, in need of assistance of some type, one feels confident that (at least) a like-minded other person will provide the needed assistance—without even a need to request help from another. “I’ll scratch your back when needed, but I also expect that you’ll scratch mine when needed.”

- *Individuality* is a trait that, if one values it, one will do so both in oneself and in others. One will not impose “unreasonable” standards on others—which does not mean, though, that one will lack any expectations of others. But insofar as one *does* have certain expectations of others, they are ones that have been mutually agreed upon (by the group—actual or hypothetical—to which one belongs). One will allow oneself as much individuality as one deems necessary (for one’s own psychological health), but will do so within the parameters established by the group to which one belongs. (The society within which one lives may also establish certain boundaries, of course, such that if one crosses any of them, one will be subject to arrest and some sort of punishment. Given this, one will also pay attention to those boundaries!)
- *Equality* has both objective and subjective elements, the important one, however, is *feeling equal* to others—and, in turn, regarding *others* as one’s equal. An important distinction that comes into play here is differences in *kind* and differences in *degree*. In my interpretation of “equality” here I assume that people will recognize that in terms of some given trait measurable on a *quantitative scale* (such as strength), some will be “higher” than oneself, and others will be “lower.” That is, *inequality* will exist—and the general attitude will be “that’s just the way it is.” However, people will also recognize that others can be thought of as differing in *kind*, in which case no basis exists for declaring that one *kind* of person is “superior” (or “inferior”) to another. In the “better” society one will recognize that there are differences in degree, but will *primarily* think of each person as *unique*. In that respect, all would be regarded as *equal*—in both *nature* and in *worth*.
- *Respect* is an attitude, and encompasses both respect for oneself and for others. If one has respect for oneself, one will not be afraid of having one’s own thoughts, and of conveying them to others—doing so, however, in a manner that is respectful of those others (i.e., a manner that recognizes that others have *their own* views, and don’t want those views criticized in a direct manner). Respect for others involves not just being circumspect in *what* one communicates to others, and *how*, but also how one *acts* relative to others. So that not only does one not inflict any physical harm on others (and attempts to avoid inflicting any psychological harm as well), but one lends help to others in time of need—but in a manner that does not damage the self-respect of the “helpee.”

That we *should*, as Americans, prize diversity was stated well recently by John Nichols (referring specifically to *religious* diversity-toleration):

The United States was not founded as a country that “tolerated” religious diversity. It was founded as a country that embraced that diversity as one of its greatest strengths, welcoming Christians, Jews and Muslims, believers, nonbelievers and skeptics into a polity where, as George Washington explained, “The government... gives to bigotry no sanction, to persecution no assistance.”¹⁴⁹

Having now offered some clarification of the meanings of the six goals, let us next make a few comments on each of the three “pairings” identified above:

- *Autonomy – Individuality*

To have the subjective feeling that one is making the decisions that one is acting upon (while acting within the constraints that one has participated in establishing for one’s group—and also the constraints imposed on one by one’s society), one needs to have a sense of oneself as a distinct individual. Thus, a sense of individuality is necessary before one can have a sense of autonomy; but as one *exercises* one’s autonomy (i.e., actually makes decisions that are then acted upon), one’s sense of individuality will increase in strength. Thus, the two goals are interrelated.

- *Respect – Solidarity*

The concept of solidarity can be applied at both individual and group levels. That is, we can say of a given person that s/he has a feeling of solidarity relative to a certain group, and if such feelings are common within a group, we can characterize the group as a “solidary” one. If a group is to develop as a solidary one, the individuals comprising the group must have respect one for another. Indeed, it is that respect felt by individuals toward other individuals that enables them to form a group in the first place! Once formed, the interaction that occurs among the members—if it continues to be based on respect—likely will lead to a group that becomes more solidary over time. As it becomes such, there is the danger that it will become too much “of one mind,” so that tendencies arise to suppress individuality, and deny autonomy to “deviants.” On the other hand, a solidary group offers the advantage that it can make decisions for collective action fairly quickly and smoothly, and then act on such decisions in an effective and enthusiastic manner. The “trick” is to find the right degree of solidarity, so that the advantages of such a group do not begin to outweigh the disadvantages—the latter impacting particularly certain individual members of the group.

¹⁴⁹ “The Tea Party Constitution Versus the Thomas Jefferson Constitution,” posted October 29, 2010, at <http://www.commondreams.org/view/2010/10/29-0>. The article originally appeared in *The Nation*.

- *Equality – Security*

Security, as I indicated above, pertains to the satisfaction of one's sustenance and comfort needs, as well as "security" needs in the more common meaning of the words (i.e., being safe from various types of threats on one's person). If one lives in a society within which each person tends to perceive each other person as a unique person, it follows that no basis exists for perceiving one person as more "important"—or in some other way "better"—than any other person. That is, one will perceive the others in one's society as equal to oneself—neither "superior" nor "inferior." This sort of perception will affect how one interacts with others, in that it one will not only be concerned with one's own security needs, but those of others as well. And with (basically) everyone in the society having a sense of security, the quality of one's interactions with others will tend to be high. Insofar as interactions in our society today are so often characterized by feelings of inferiority-superiority, and those feelings are accompanied by actions involving manipulation, mistreatment, and even violence, I would attribute such actions—ultimately, if not directly—to the actual and felt inequality in our society.¹⁵⁰

If the above six traits are accepted as ones that one would like to have as common in a "better" society, and the above-mentioned relationships exist within the pairs identified,¹⁵¹ the first point that I would like to make is that although all six of the above traits can exist in certain individuals (or at least exist in their minds as *ideals*), what's necessary is for them to exist not just in a few individuals, but in most. In fact, with some of the traits, either they are widespread within a group or they (basically) don't exist at all. For example, it is difficult for one to feel a sense of solidarity toward the others around oneself if their system(s) of values differs significantly from one's own.

As to the "look" of the New Society, what I have in mind is a society that might be thought of as a federation of cooperative eco-communities—a "cityless and countryless" society, to allude to Henry Olerich's old book.¹⁵² Not that I believe that such a society either *can* or *should* be created; but I believe that the *envisioning* of such a society can serve the function of a "Sorelian myth."¹⁵³

¹⁵⁰ That extreme inequality has negative implications for a society has been argued recently in Richard Wilkinson and Kate Pickett, *The Spirit Level: Why Greater Equality Makes Societies Stronger*. New York: Bloomsbury Press, 2010. Foreword by Robert B. Reich.

¹⁵¹ It is entirely possible that one will accept the six traits that I have identified, but will "pair" them in a different way. I don't assume that the traits *must* be paired as I have done so. I'm easy to get along with!

¹⁵² Henry Olerich, *A Cityless and Countryless World: An Outline of Practical Cooperative Individualism*. Holstein, IA: Gilmore & Olerich, 1893.

<http://books.google.com/books?id=5kdYAAAAMAAJ&dq=olerich,+henry+cityless+and+countryless>

¹⁵³ See the Appendix to Chapter 1.

A point that I would insist on, for planning purposes, is use of the Structured Interaction Group (SIG) (see Chapter 7), because of the *consequences* associated with participation. These consequences are of such great potential importance that I think that it would be a mistake to proceed, in creating the New Society, without using this institution.

Before discussing the SIG, however, I need to present my concept of the Good Society, and offer a “strategy” for achieving it.

Chapter 5. The Survival Question: Global Warming

My interest in this book is not so much in “global warming” *per se* as, rather, in how to *respond* to “global warming.” It is desirable, however, and even necessary, to present some commentary on this topic, and I therefore do so in this brief chapter.

I have put “global warming” in quotation marks not because I am a “denier” but, rather, because the term itself is unfortunate—and I can offer no suitable substitute. (“Global atmospheric temporal changes” might be more accurate, but is too much of a mouthful!) What makes the term “unfortunate” is that the atmospheric phenomena associated with the term include not only a *trend* in increase (*not* a continuous increase, note) in the global mean temperature, but also (a) an increased number of storms, (b) an increase in their severity, and (c) increased variability in atmospheric conditions—for a given area over time, and geographically. Indeed, there may be other atmospheric phenomena of importance that are missing from this list.

Some distinguish between “global warming” and “climate change,”¹⁵⁴ but I do not—and also have problems with “climate change.” For given that, by definition, the “climate” of a place is the temporal *pattern* of atmospheric phenomena (e.g., temperature, precipitation) from an annual standpoint, if no such pattern exists, the place cannot be said to *have* a climate! That is, given that the sequence of atmospheric “events” for one year must be highly similar to that sequence for any other year for a place to have a “climate,” increasing annual variability in atmospheric events for a given place means that the very *concept* of “climate” becomes increasingly meaningless for that place. Despite my problem with “climate change,” I use that term in the ensuing discussion.

When Wladimir Köppen¹⁵⁵ introduced his classification of climate types in 1884, what enabled him to do so is that the temporal patterning referred to above existed. Increasingly, however, an expectation of “climate scientists” is that this patterning will be becoming less and less pronounced—to the point that “climate” will no longer have a referent (thereby being equivalent to “unicorn”!¹⁵⁶). The *word* will continue to exist, of course, but increasingly it will point to a “thing” that is fading away, perhaps to the point of non-existence. Put another way, global warming does not involve a change from one climate *type* to another; rather, it involves change from a climate type toward a *non-climate* sort of situation.

I use the term “global warming” here simply because it is in common usage, meaning by that term the array of atmospheric phenomena (at minimum) identified above.

¹⁵⁴ For example, Mark Hertsgaard, *Hot: Living Through the Next Fifty Years on Earth*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2011, p. 5.

¹⁵⁵ See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wladimir_K%C3%B6ppen.

¹⁵⁶ Except for the fact that unicorns only existed in “fairy tales” (I’ve been told).

“Climate deniers” in our midst represent an important obstacle to addressing the problem of global warming. Although some individuals are likely deniers because they (understandably) have difficulty in relating what they observe, day by day, to claims by scientists who have been researching the matter for many years, a much lesser degree of innocence is associated with many others in this group. Corporations involved in industries contributing to global warming have an economic incentive to continue their activities, for their orientation tends to be only to the short-run—making profits in the short-run, so that those who have invested in their business can make a good return on their investments. What many such corporations have done, therefore, is hire “scientists” not expert in “climate science,” and/or scientists willing to work for corporations to provide “proof” that global warming is a hoax. If one goes to <http://books.google.com> and enters “global warming,” one will find that many of one’s hits are of books by such individuals—giving the impression, to the non-specialist, that the deniers have a solid basis for their position.¹⁵⁷

In our legal system, defense lawyers are expected to develop a case for their client (e.g., Casey Anthony—who was recently acquitted in her trial), even if they are convinced that that individual is guilty—and no one regards this as unethical: they are just doing what our legal system expects of them. But scientists should not think of themselves as lawyers (God forbid!); rather, they should think of themselves as truth-seekers, whose ethics do not permit them to be “bought off.” But one suspects that at least some of the scientists who are engaged in global warming denial have compromised their ethics. Which is not to say that climate scientists do not have disagreements one with another, however.

For example, a posting by Dr. Gavin A. Schmidt¹⁵⁸ is followed by 727 comments (!) at last count by others (mainly other scientists, I assume). But that fact of having divergent views is not a peculiarity but, rather, a common phenomenon in the sciences. Scientists who have not “sold out” are, on the one hand, not afraid of expressing their views to other scientists, with the full expectation that other scientists may find flaws in their thinking. In learning of the reactions of other scientists, they then modify their views, for their ultimate interest is in arriving at objective truth (i.e., statements agreed to by most other specialists in the same area). But scientists are human beings just like the rest of us, so that they are not always able, as a group, to achieve universal agreement. And given that in the case of climate science there is but limited opportunity for experimentation, and projections into the future (which are *inherently* “non-

¹⁵⁷ For a good discussion of “denial” see Nicole Hodgson: <http://www.abc.net.au/unleashed/2778378.html>. Also see Clive Hamilton, *Requiem for a Species: Why We Resist the Truth About Climate Change*. Washington, DC: Earthscan, 2010. Additional books on the subject include James Hoggan (with Richard Littlemore), *Climate Cover-Up: The Crusade to Deny Global Warming*. Vancouver, Canada: Greystone Books, 2009; Naomi Oreskes and Erik M. Conway, *Merchants of Doubt: How a Handful of Scientists Obscured the Truth on Issues From Tobacco to Global Warming*. New York: Bloomsbury Press, 2010; and Haydn Washington and John Cook, *Climate Change Denial: Heads in the Sand*. Washington, DC: Earthscan, 2011.

¹⁵⁸ A noted scientist with NASA’s Goddard Institute for Space Studies. For the posting see: <http://www.realclimate.org/index.php/archives/2010/06/climate-change-commitment-ii/>.

factual” in that they pertain to the “not yet”) are an integral part of the science, it is by no means surprising that there is perhaps less agreement among climate scientists than most other scientists.

From the fact that universal agreement is difficult, if not impossible, to achieve in climate science, it does not follow that scientists should abandon their research in that area, for their research has tremendous relevance for the human future. Nor is it sensible for us lay people to deny the reality of global warming: The hurricanes, tornadoes, floods, and fires (resulting from drought) that have occurred in this country so far this year may not have been *demonstrably* caused by global warming; these events have, however, been entirely *consistent* with global warming—and that fact should give one pause.

If some of the deniers have been publishing misinformation, and thereby convincing some and confusing others, another unfortunate fact regarding global warming is that so many in our society are simply clueless about it. As one talks with others, reads the newspaper, watches television, etc., one rarely encounters others who seem even somewhat informed about the topic, or concerned about the implications that may be associated with global warming. One would think that Hurricane Katrina would have been a “wake up” call for many in our society, given that the occurrence of severe hurricanes is entirely consistent with the existence of global warming; but it appears not to have been. As just one example, *60 Minutes* tonight (July 10, 2011) had a segment on deriving natural gas from shale rock. Neither the interviewer (Lesley Stahl) nor anyone interviewed evinced any concern for global warming. Someone mentioned that natural gas is less polluting than other fossil fuels—which is true—but failed to note that its burning *still* results in the emission of carbon dioxide—thereby contributing to global warming.

In discussing global warming, a useful beginning point is simply to note that the earth¹⁵⁹ has an atmosphere,¹⁶⁰ and this atmosphere not only *enables* life on earth (through its heat retention—i.e., “greenhouse effect”¹⁶¹—and the particular gases present), but *protects* life. I should add that the atmosphere itself is almost entirely a product of the activities of living organisms at the earth’s surface.

Oxygen (essential for human life) constitutes about 21 % (by volume) of our atmosphere, and carbon dioxide (essential for plant life—and thereby indirectly essential for human life as well) about 0.04 %. Although carbon dioxide (CO₂) constitutes but a small portion of atmospheric

¹⁵⁹ Now being referred to as “Eaarth” by Bill McKibben! See his *Eaarth: Making a Life on a Tough New Planet*. New York: Times Books, 2010. The basis for this renaming is the fact that the change that has *already* occurred is so significant that a new name is warranted. See Paul Greenberg <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/05/09/books/review/Greenberg-t.html>.

¹⁶⁰ See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Atmosphere_of_Earth.

¹⁶¹ See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Greenhouse_effect.

gases, it is important not only for plant life, but important as a “greenhouse gas.”¹⁶² That is, (a) solar radiation striking earth (and absorbed by land, buildings, water, etc.) is short-wave, (b) heat energy emitted by earth in turn is long-wave, and (c) thereby absorbed by certain gases in the atmosphere, such as carbon dioxide. Such gases are referred to as “greenhouse gases” because, in playing a role similar to that of greenhouse glass, they are involved in heating the atmosphere. Thus, carbon dioxide is not only essential for plant life (and thereby *indirectly* essential for human life); its role in heating the atmosphere is of *direct* importance for human existence.

English scientist James Lovelock has concluded, as a result of his research and reasoning, that (a) earth’s atmosphere has evolved over time, at some point acquiring characteristics that enabled it to support species such as the human species.¹⁶³ In addition, (b) he has concluded that earth behaves as if it were itself a living entity, for earth seems to be somehow equipped (like a human body) with (1) *negative* feedback mechanisms that “work” to keep it on an “even keel,” and (2) *positive* feedback mechanisms that behave in a self-destructive manner if and when the system is stressed beyond some “tipping point.” This led Lovelock—at the suggestion of a neighbor (William Golding, author of *Lord of the Flies*)—to refer to earth as *Gaia*¹⁶⁴ the goddess of earth, although Lovelock was not, of course, suggesting that earth was *literally* a living being.

If earth is able to regulate itself, and thereby incidentally enable life to exist on earth (unlike our near neighbors in the universe, Mercury and Mars), it does not follow from that fact that that ability is absolute. If its system is “shocked” sufficiently (e.g., as a result of volcanic eruptions), it will be “thrown out of kilter,” but may be able to return to “normal” after a certain period of time. There remains the possibility, however, that a “shock” received by earth would be so severe that Gaia would, in effect, “die”—in the sense of changing so drastically as to be no longer able to support life. Such a “shock” could come from various sources, but the most important one for us (from a human *control* standpoint) is human activities (including

¹⁶² See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/IPCC_list_of_greenhouse_gases.

¹⁶³ An interesting point relative to the view that evolution has occurred on earth is that prior to there being an atmosphere one could say that the situation was “natural,” when plant life began one could say that the new situation was “natural,” when humans appeared, one could say that *that* new situation was “natural,” etc. Given these facts, it might appear that it is unreasonable for me to assert (e.g., see my <http://dissidentvoice.org/2011/04/our-primary-problem/> and <http://dissidentvoice.org/2011/05/some-uses-of-biology-three-perspectives/>) that human life today is, for most of us, “unnatural.” However, what I mean by that is that prior to the Agricultural Revolution there occurred a co-development of humans as biological entities and the gatherer-hunter way of life—meaning that each “fit” the other. Since that time, however, our ways of life have changed drastically while our biology has remained basically the same (see Chapter 2)—resulting in a “discrepancy” between the way of life for which we had become “designed” and the way of life that we actually have. (As James Lovelock has noted, “We are perfectly evolved to live as hunter-gatherers.” *The Vanishing Face of Gaia: A Final Warning*. New York: Basic Books, 2009, p. 80). Which fact could very well be the root of virtually all of our problems! Because of this, I believe that it is perfectly reasonable to state that our present way of life is “unnatural.” (I am puzzled that Lovelock, in noting that we still are “designed” to be gatherer-hunters, does not—if would seem—see the fact that we *aren’t* a serious problem.)

¹⁶⁴ See [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gaia_\(mythology\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gaia_(mythology)).

breathing!¹⁶⁵) which result in the addition of carbon dioxide (and other greenhouse gases) to the atmosphere. In fact, the “global warming” that has been occurring appears to be largely a consequence of human activities.

I’ll comment further on that matter shortly, but first would like briefly to discuss a few historical developments relative to global warming research, beginning with Jean Baptiste Joseph Fourier¹⁶⁶ [1768 – 1830]. Fourier can be said to have been the discoverer of the greenhouse effect, for in the 1820s he (a mathematician and physicist) calculated that given earth’s size and distance from the sun, it should be much colder than it is. Fourier guessed that various factors might be responsible for this fact, including the possibility that earth’s atmosphere was somehow acting as an insulator. Fourier was not, however, able to provide a definitive answer as to why earth was warmer than it “should be.”

To Swedish scientist Svante Arrhenius¹⁶⁷ [1859 – 1927] must be given credit for providing basic understanding of the “greenhouse effect.” In attempting to learn why ice ages had occurred, Arrhenius speculated that there had been changes in the atmosphere’s carbon dioxide content over time, and that this variation is what caused variations in earth’s temperature. In formulating this hypothesis, he had drawn upon previous work by other scientists, Josef Stefan [1835 – 1893] and Stefan’s student Ludwig Boltzmann [1844 – 1906] in particular. Arrhenius did not, however, make note of a change occurring in earth’s temperature during his lifetime—in part (I would assume) because his interests lay elsewhere, in part because such a change was not notable then.

The concept of “global warming” did not arise until after Charles David Keeling [1928 – 2005] began measuring carbon dioxide levels in the atmosphere, using an instrument that he had himself developed while at California Institute of Technology (“Caltech”) in Pasadena, California. The measurements that he made while in California indicated an increase in CO₂ level over time, and as Keeling saw significance in that fact, he decided—with the help and encouragement of Roger Revelle, Director of the Scripps Institution of Oceanography—to establish a recording station on Mauna Loa, Hawaii (a location chosen for its relative isolation from nearby sources of carbon dioxide emissions). A graph¹⁶⁸ indicating recordings at that site indicates a definite trend in CO₂ increase since Keeling began recording values in 1958. (I find it of interest that the May 2011 reading of CO₂ was 394.16, the June reading slightly less,

¹⁶⁵ Lovelock (*op. cit.*, p. 74) has stated that “the exhalations of breath and other gaseous emissions by the nearly 7 billion people on Earth, their pets, and their livestock are responsible for 23 percent of all greenhouse emissions.”

¹⁶⁶ See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Joseph_Fourier.

¹⁶⁷ See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Svante_Arrhenius.

¹⁶⁸ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charles_David_Keeling.

393.69.¹⁶⁹ (However, I should add that seasonal variation is to be expected.) Also of interest here is historical data; see this site:¹⁷⁰

The data collected at the station in Hawaii indicated that whereas the CO₂ level in 1958 had been 315 parts per million (ppm), by 2005 it had climbed to 380 ppm. Keeling noted that this rise was correlated with fossil fuel emissions, so that given that fact, those emissions could basically be attributable to the *burning* of fossil fuels by humans (as opposed to other possible sources). This conclusion has enabled scientists—in noting that the earth’s mean *temperature* has also been rising—to reach the very reasonable conclusion that that heating has principally resulted as a consequence of human use of fossil fuels. That is, the global warming that is occurring—and there’s no question that it *has been*—is largely “anthropogenic.”

Climate science research subsequent to Keeling’s empirical findings falls into several categories, and I will give attention to five of them here. First, scientists have determined that in addition to CO₂, such gases as water vapor, methane, nitrous oxide, and ozone are greenhouse gases.¹⁷¹ Indeed, it has been determined that methane is an especially effective greenhouse gas, being about 20 times more effective than carbon dioxide.

Second, the modeling of climate change data has occupied the attention of a number of researchers over the past few years. The following site¹⁷² (of the U. S. Environmental Protection Agency, EPA) presents a number of projections for the period between now and 2100 CE, and it can be noted here that there are (regarding “emission scenarios”) lines for constant CO₂, low growth, moderate growth, and high growth. The reason for the multiple lines is that even if one has a model that predicts *past* changes in temperature accurately, it does not follow that one can use that model to predict *future* changes—for the simple reason that the future values that one “plugs” into one’s model as explanatory (i.e., X) variables will, of necessity, be *guesses*, not *facts*; they are not facts because, in pertaining to the “not yet,” they *cannot* be. The EPA states (on the above site) that (using the period 1980 – 1990 as the reference point) it’s possible that the temperature increase to 2100 CE will be from 2 to 11 °F., with the most likely increase being between 3.2 and 7.2 °F. Models created by other agencies or individuals would be expected to produce different results, of course.

The web site established by Robert A. Rohle (a Ph. D. student, in Physics, at the University of California-Berkeley is extremely useful in that it provides numerous graphs, charts, and links.¹⁷³

¹⁶⁹ <http://www.esrl.noaa.gov/gmd/ccgg/trends/>.

¹⁷⁰ <http://maps.grida.no/go/graphic/historical-trends-in-carbon-dioxide-concentrations-and-temperature-on-a-geological-and-recent-time-scale>.

¹⁷¹ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Greenhouse_gas.

¹⁷² <http://www.epa.gov/climatechange/science/futuretc.html#ref>.

¹⁷³ http://www.globalwarmingart.com/wiki/File:Global_Warming_Predictions.png.

For example, he presents the following chart, with information derived from eight different climate science groups:

Temperature Increase 2000 to 2100 (°C)			
Model	Total	Land	Ocean
CCSR/NIES	4.7	7.0	3.8
CCCma	4.0	5.0	3.6
CSIRO	3.8	4.9	3.4
Hadley Centre	3.7	5.5	3.0
GFDL	3.3	4.2	3.0
MPI-M	3.0	4.6	2.4
NCAR PCM	2.3	3.1	2.0
NCAR CSM	2.2	2.7	2.0
Mean	3.4	4.6	2.9

(I will identify just two of the above groups here: CCSR/NIES is for Center for Climate System Research/National Institute for Environmental Studies, in Japan; NCAR CSM is for National Center for Atmospheric Research Climate System Model (United States).

Notice, with these different models, that the variation in land temperature varies from 2.7 to 7.0 °C, the variation in ocean temperature from 2.0 to 3.8 °C, with the total variation varying between 2.2 and 4.7 °C. Some might be tempted to interpret this variation as proof that climate scientists don't know what they are doing—and there is some merit in such a conclusion, in the sense that climate science is a *maturing*, not a *mature*, science at present. Apart from that fact, however, there is the fact that making projections regarding future situations/events is inherently difficult, given that projections are, of necessity, always based on some unknowns.

It would seem that the sensible way of perceiving these variations is to recognize that although they differ one from another, they all project an *increase* in mean temperature; none predicts either no change or decrease. Second, although a 2.2 °C change, e.g., between 2000 and 2100 may seem like a small change, in fact it represents a huge amount of heat energy. When most of us think of such a change, we are thinking of the change at our *particular location* on a particular day—in which case that amount of change is only detectable with a thermometer (referring to “normal” people). When the *entire earth* is the object of measurement, however, the meaning of

a 2.2 °C change is entirely different—a matter that I comment on shortly.

Before doing so, however, I would like to note that James Lovelock, as a result of some experimentation, determined that “suddenly, between 400 and 500 ppm of carbon dioxide, a small increase of heat or carbon dioxide causes a sudden nine-degree rise of temperature.” Lovelock went on to note: “The Earth’s atmospheric greenhouse is now well above 400 ppm (carbon dioxide is near 390 ppm but methane, nitrous oxide and the CFCs lift the total effect to nearer that of 430 ppm carbon dioxide).”¹⁷⁴ (Lovelock’s reference here is to what climate scientists refer to as the “carbon dioxide equivalent”¹⁷⁵.)

In discussing models I should note that James Lovelock has been critical of many of the modeling efforts to date, on the basis that they “are limited by a climate theory based almost wholly on atmospheric physics, and even this is far from complete.”¹⁷⁶ As a consequence of their deficiencies in assumptions, Lovelock notes that “as I write this in 2008, more than one thousand of the world’s best climate scientists have worked for seventeen years to forecast future climates and have failed to predict the climate of *today*”¹⁷⁷—a serious deficiency, indeed! (Italics added.)

Given that the concepts of negative and positive feedback are key ones in Lovelock’s thinking about earth, he has advocated for their inclusion in climate models. Associated with the concepts of negative and positive feedback is the concept of non-linearity—the idea that (in this case) rather than temperature increasing at a steady (in trend terms) rate over time, it is likely to increase at an *accelerating* rate—if a certain mean temperature for earth is reached. Put another way, there is the possibility of a “tipping point” which, if reached, will be followed by a period of rapid increase.—uncontrollable rapid increase (very possibly), in fact.¹⁷⁸ Thus, it is incumbent on us humans to do what we can to prevent that from happening.

Which leads, third, to an interesting question: If humans were, beginning tomorrow, to cease emitting greenhouse gases into the atmosphere, what would happen? I posed this question to GISS scientist (see footnote 4) Gavin A. Schmidt, and here’s what he emailed back to me: “There is no ‘immediate’ effect of ceasing CO₂ emissions on temperature.” However, if one considers not only CO₂ emissions but other ones as well, “the immediate effect of ceasing all emissions (including CH₄, NO_x, VOCs, SO₂, etc.) would have an impact—but that would be one of warming! (because the short-lived species have a net cooling effect).” Lovelock explains

¹⁷⁴ *Op. cit.*, p. 52.

¹⁷⁵ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Carbon_dioxide_equivalent.

¹⁷⁶ *Op. cit.*, p. 40.

¹⁷⁷ *Op. cit.*, p. 7.

¹⁷⁸ See, e. g., Dahr Jamail <http://www.commondreams.org/headline/2011/06/23> and Gaia Vince . http://www.trec-uk.org.uk/articles/NS_2009-02-25.html.

this by noting that “atmospheric aerosol . . . reflects sunlight back to space and makes global warming less severe than it might otherwise be.” And adds that IPCC contributors Peter Cox and Meinrat Andreae, in a *Nature* paper, “warned that if the haze disappeared, global heating would intensify, and dangerous change could be the consequence.”¹⁷⁹

The latter conclusion seemingly leads one to believe that “we’re damned if we do, and damned if we don’t!” And there is merit in such a conclusion. But the proper conclusion to draw from such a conclusion is “let’s get on with it, and the sooner the better.” Doing what? I’ll address that question in the next chapter.

Fifth, then, is the matter of consequences, and it is useful to think of there being at least two levels of consequences, direct and indirect. Direct consequences would include the following:¹⁸⁰

- At some point in time—and at some locations—temperatures may become so warm, for extended periods, as to be unbearable.¹⁸¹
- There will be more storms, and more severe storms.
- The flooding of rivers will become more common.
- Tsunamis will become more common.
- As drought affects certain areas, fires will become more common.
- Diseases will spread.
- Migrations from seacoast areas will be necessary as sea level rises.
- Animal migrations (caused by loss of habitat) may occur (and result in animal attacks in some areas).
- Food supplies will be diminished as some areas become less arable (e.g., desertification, increased rainfall), hail destroys crops, etc.—resulting in increased cost of food, to the point that it becomes unaffordable by many.

¹⁷⁹ *Op. cit.*, pp. 50 – 51.

¹⁸⁰ For further discussion see <http://www.environmentalgraffiti.com/scientech/5-deadliest-effects-of-global-warming/276>

¹⁸¹ See, e.g., <http://www.nicholas.duke.edu/thegreengrok/food/heatstress-pnas052010>.

- Violence may become a serious problem as more and more people become desperate.¹⁸²

The indirect results of the above events are most important to humans, and include property damage (and the costs therewith associated), increased suffering, and a severe culling of the human population.¹⁸³

For example, James Lovelock—who favors technological approaches to the global warming problem—“fears [that] we won’t invent the necessary technologies in time, and expects ‘about 80%’ of the world’s population to be wiped out by 2100. Prophets have been foretelling Armageddon since time began [not quite true!], he says. ‘But this is the real thing.’”¹⁸⁴

Such a prediction is scary. But even more so is Dr. Erik R. Pianca’s recommendation of a deliberate 90% culling of the human population!¹⁸⁵ I hope that Dr. Pianca meant this as a “tongue in cheek” recommendation, but have no way of knowing whether or not it was. (Also see this site.¹⁸⁶)

Lovelock’s “80% figure” was given in 2008. In his 2009 book (*op. cit.*) he states (p. 6) “we do have to take seriously the possibility that global heating may all but eliminate people from Earth.” And (p. 33): “The climate war could kill nearly all of us and leave the few survivors living a Stone Age existence.” And (pp. 247 - 248): “Our first imperative is to survive, but soon we face the appalling question of whom we can let aboard the lifeboats? And whom must we reject? There will be no ducking this question for before long there will be a great clamor from climate refugees seeking a safe haven in those few parts where the climate is tolerable and food is available.”

Even if one views Lovelock as somewhat of an alarmist, the fact that the vast majority of climate scientists (a) believe that global warming is occurring and (b) poses severe risks for our species (to say nothing of other species, of course) should suggest to us that we take global warming seriously.

¹⁸² See, e.g., Ed Vulliamy, “Ciudad Juarez is All Our Futures. This is the Inevitable War of Capitalism Gone Mad” <http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2011/jun/20/war-capitalism-mexico-drug-cartels>. Vulliamy concluded his article by quoting from Charles Bowden’s *Murder City: Ciudad Juarez and the Global Economy’s New Killing Fields*. (New York: Nation Books, 2010) “Juarez [Mexico] is not a breakdown of the social order. Juarez is the new order.”

¹⁸³ Lovelock (*op. cit.*, p. 31) states regarding dangers: “Our gravest dangers are not from climate change itself, but indirectly from starvation, competition for space and resources, and war.”

¹⁸⁴ See “Enjoy Life While You Can”

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/theguardian/2008/mar/01/scienceofclimatechange.climatechange>

¹⁸⁵ <http://www.prisonplanet.com/articles/april2006/030406massculling.htm>.

¹⁸⁶ <http://www.abc.net.au/rn/ockhamsrazor/stories/2006/1807002.htm#transcript>.

How, sixth, should we respond. I am going to keep my comments here short by simply noting that two basic approaches can be used—that of *mitigation* efforts and that of *adaptation* ones. As both of those topics are discussed well in Lovelock’s book (among many others), I am simply going to suggest here that the reader explore that literature.

The recommendations that I offer in Chapter 6 can be thought of responding to this statement by Paul Gilding, former head of Greenpeace International: “We have the opportunity to build a society that represents our highest capacities, with extreme poverty eliminated; great technology that works *with* rather than against nature and provides us with abundant energy and resources; a closed-loop economy with no waste; communities that work and support one another; happiness, satisfaction, and service as the central approach of ‘money=happier people.’”¹⁸⁷

The recommendations that I offer involve *both* mitigation and adaptation, but are also—and simultaneously—addressed to problems in addition to global warming—i.e., the problems that global warming can be expected to *cause*.

¹⁸⁷ *The Great Disruption: Why the Climate Crisis Will Bring On the End of Shopping and the Birth of a New World*. New York: Bloomsbury Press, 2011, p. 7.

Chapter 6. The Good Society: Characteristics

. . . America must complement ongoing efforts at reform and working within the system with at least equal efforts aimed at transformative change leading to a new political economy—a new operating system that routinely delivers good results for people and planet at home and around the world. The current system is simply not delivering economically, socially, environmentally, or politically. We need a new one. This type of systemic change will require a great struggle, and it will not come quickly. The truth is we are still in the design stage of building a new operating system. That system won’t be socialism, by the way, and it won’t be today’s American capitalism either.¹⁸⁸

Let me begin here by noting that reactions to the phenomenon of global warming (discussed in the previous chapter)—the most important problem, by far, facing us today—have been varied:

- Many in our midst simply deny that it is occurring (e.g., Denis Rancourt¹⁸⁹). I have strong doubts that they are right (else why would I be writing these essays?!), and have no illusions that many of them can be “converted.” At any rate, I am not writing for such individuals.
- Some acknowledge that global warming is occurring, but are so fixated on the short-run that their response is that doing anything to reduce, if not halt, further emissions of greenhouse gases would hurt the economy. If the economy must continue to be structured in the way it is now, they have a point. But if global warming is actually occurring—as I believe it is—the implication is that our economy will be changing *even if we don’t want it to change*; and in doing so is likely to experience chaotic conditions. Given that possibility, my response is that we should plan *now* for change, and begin implementing those plans—to minimize the chaos that likely will be involved with the transition.
- Others accept the possibility that global warming is occurring, but are so “into” neo-classical Economics that they are convinced that “the market” will automatically solve the problem. People who think this way are saying, in effect: “We don’t want to be forthright in noting *who* is making *what* decisions (yes, *decisions!*) for what nefarious *purposes*.” That is, there is more than a hint of dishonesty—or is it ignorance?!—associated with the use of the term “market.” I would add here that fellow Wisconsinite Thorstein Veblen [1857 – 1929] “believed that the main ideological function of neoclassical economics [with its “market” concept] was to obfuscate structures of

¹⁸⁸ Gus Speth, “American Prospect: Decline and Growth.” <http://www.thesolutionsjournal.com/node/951>

¹⁸⁹ <http://dissidentvoice.org/2011/03/the-lie-of-climate-change-science/>,

domination and exploitation and, it might be noted, waste.”¹⁹⁰ I fear that if we allow “the market” to solve this problem, we will end with a situation comparable to the sorry homes that Mike Holmes fixes, as presented on the television program *Holmes on Homes!*¹⁹¹

- Still others accept the reality of global warming, but reject the suggestion that “the market” will “save” us in favor of the argument that our salvation lies with technology. James Lovelock (who has lent his support to this option) has provided us with an excellent discussion of solutions having their basis in technology.¹⁹² I would add that I am in partial agreement with Lovelock—with the proviso that we recognize that a given such solution may result in other problems, so that pursuit of this option must proceed with care. Basically, however, my position is that technological solutions should be implemented in conjunction with the solution that I propose in this essay and (particularly) the next essay. Why? Because the solution that I offer is broader in scope than any technological solution.

My starting point here is to recognize that the most important problem facing us Americans—indeed, us humans—at present is that of global warming—for continued global warming threatens our very existence as a species (to say nothing of other species, of course). However, as one thinks about our country, one must admit we have numerous other problems—ones that are more clearly of an immediate nature, some of them being:

- Unemployment (a problem with which our political leaders seem to be obsessed). (Just kidding!)
- Home foreclosures (to be followed more and more by business closedowns).
- Homelessness.
- Poverty
- Civil rights violations.
- Prejudice/discrimination.

¹⁹⁰ Rick Tilman, *Thorstein Veblen and His Critics, 1891 – 1963: Conservative, Liberal, and Radical Perspectives*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992, p. 15.

¹⁹¹ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Holmes_on_Homes.

¹⁹² *Op. cit.* See his chapters 4 (“Energy and Food Sources,” pp. 99 – 138) and 5 (“Geoengineering,” pp. 139 – 158).

- Extreme inequality in income.¹⁹³
- Alcoholism.
- An addiction to gambling.
- Drug abuse.
- Cancer, heart problems, and other health issues.
- Teen pregnancies.
- Rape.
- Spousal and child abuse.
- A lack of rights for gays.
- Stress.
- Depression.
- Boredom.
- Corruption in the business world and in government.
- Crime—legal and otherwise.¹⁹⁴
- A biased—and largely clueless—mass media.
- Unfairness in taxation policies.¹⁹⁵
- Imperialistic adventurism, and the “blowback” it engenders.¹⁹⁶
- Etc.

¹⁹³ Marcia Alesan Dawkins reports (in “Mississippi Still Burning”) that “According to last month’s Pew Research Center **analysis** of newly available government data from 2009, ‘The median wealth of white households is 20 times that of black households and 18 times that of Hispanic households.’”

http://www.truthdig.com/report/item/mississippi_still_burning_20110811/

¹⁹⁴ See Phil Rockstroh’s “Life in an Age of Looting” at <http://www.commondreams.org/view/2011/08/12-2>. His use of the terms “Shock Doctrine” and “Disaster Capitalism” are allusions to Naomi Klein, *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism*. New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2007.

¹⁹⁵ See, e.g., <http://www.commondreams.org/view/2011/06/30-7>.

¹⁹⁶ See, e.g., http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chalmers_Johnson.

My position is that these various problems—including global warming—are all an integral part of our societal system. That is, they are not *foreign* elements of our societal system; rather, they are the sorts of problems that one would expect a society such as ours to ‘produce’—and it has. This is not to say that those problems existed 200 years ago in this country—or even *could* have existed then. It *is* to say, however, that the seeds of those problems existed in our society 200 years ago, and that it was only a matter of time before they surfaced.

Given this perspective on our problems as Americans and humans, the logical conclusion is that these problems can be solved only via societal system change—of the right sort, of course. What I propose, then, is the creation of a New Society within the rotten core of our Existing Society. I think that Mark Hertsgaard would agree that such a solution involves “thinking outside the box”!¹⁹⁷ Clearly my proposal qualifies as a “radical” one; I would point out, however, that it is “radical” in the primary sense¹⁹⁸ of that word—that of getting to the root of a problem.

Am I contradicting myself here? Is it reasonable to claim, on the one hand, that our society *had* to develop the way it did, because of seeds present in our society 200 years ago, but on the other hand seemingly ignore that “fact” and argue that existing trends need not continue—that we can now *change* our society’s direction? I agree that I seem to be “speaking out of both sides of my mouth” here, but my position is that the *dominant* component of our society 200 years ago was not the *only* component.¹⁹⁹ Being a “qualified determinist,” I would argue that our society today also contains elements in addition to the dominant ones, and that if some of them will recognize the opportunities that exist today, and act on them, there is hope that our society can begin to move in a different—and better—direction.

I should add that the change that I envision would be accomplished without government involvement;²⁰⁰ indeed, I foresee that if government plays any role, it will be solely of a negative nature! Also—and significantly—I foresee that the transition to a New Society would not involve any violence. I should qualify that, however, by stating that although I don’t foresee any violence on the part of participants in a New Society Movement (NSM), I *do* foresee the

¹⁹⁷ Hot: *Living Through the Next Fifty Years on Earth*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2011, p. 69.

¹⁹⁸ <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/radical>.

¹⁹⁹ In a sense, I am making a point here similar to the one Thorstein Veblen [1857 – 1929] made 111 years ago, in distinguishing between two types of employment. “Industrial and Pecuniary Employments,” in (pp. 279 – 323) his *The Place of Science in Modern Civilisation and Other Essays*. New York: B. W. Heubsch, 1919. Originally published in *Publications of the American Economic Association* in 1900.

²⁰⁰ Given the two basic ways of addressing global warming—mitigation efforts and adaptation—I would argue that government could play an important role in mitigation efforts (but is unlikely to!), but that individuals acting as private citizens have an opportunity to engage in both sorts of efforts. My “plan” involves both sorts of efforts, and without any governmental involvement.

possibility of violence being perpetrated by those “left behind”²⁰¹ in the Existing Order. That is, those who, for whatever reasons, have been ignoring warnings about global warming, and are suddenly confronted with its reality, may panic and become desperate, in the process attacking those in the NSM. Thus, NSM members would be wise to recognize this possibility, and plan on how they will prevent, insofar as possible, its occurrence. (They may be forced to defend themselves, but should attempt to anticipate danger, and then act to defuse it before it begins.)

If the New Society comes into being without any (positive) government involvement, one interpretation that can be given the process is that it will involve “market” forces! I hope that that fact does not give the neo-classical economists in our midst apoplexy—but it very well may. Their body of theory is built on a number of unstated assumptions, and as the NSM challenges some of those assumptions, they may become mentally imbalanced! Nevertheless, I foresee the progress of the NSM as involving “market” forces, and whether the neo-classical economists also come to see the progress that way is not a matter that will give me sleepless nights.

In creating the New Society, planners and builders should especially have two goals in mind:

- They should address the problem of global warming—planning/acting on both mitigation measures and adaptational ones.
- They should recognize that humans have certain “design specifications” (see Chapters 3 and 4), and that their well-being is dependent on having a way of life that accords with those “design specs.”

I discussed global warming at some length in Chapter 5, and have noted that the solution that I offer involves addressing mitigation and adaptation simultaneously. I agree with James Lovelock that the effects of global warming will become more and more noticeable in the years ahead, so that we will have no choice but to adapt, as best we can, to those effects—and must give adaptation priority. However, we must not neglect efforts at mitigation, and my proposal takes that fact into consideration.

Once one recognizes (likely dimly, at first) that there is a need for societal system change, the first step that needs to be taken is that of the formulation of a “picture” (or pictures) of a Better Society. We moderns typically refer to these hypothetical situations as “utopias,” after Sir Thomas More’s [1478 – 1535] novel, *Utopia*²⁰² [1616], More having chosen that name as a Greek pun on *ou-topos* (“no place”) and *eu-topos* (“good place”). In the novel, the descriptor “utopia” was applied to a hypothetical city (Amaurote) within which communalism was

²⁰¹ Perhaps there is a better choice of words here than “left behind,” given that Tim LaHaye and Jerry B. Jenkins <http://www.leftbehind.com/> have pre-empted that term, and the meaning that I am giving “left behind” here has little in common with their meaning.

²⁰² [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Utopia_\(book\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Utopia_(book)).

practiced. Likely More used monastic communalism as his model in writing the novel, that communalism ostensibly based on the communalism described in the “New Testament” book of *Acts* (2:44 – 45, and 4:32 – 37). The *idea* of a “better” society precedes More’s *Utopia* by centuries, of course, going at least back to Plato’s [c428 – 348 BCE] *Republic* [c380 BCE]. In that book (written in the form of a dialogue, featuring Socrates [c469 – 399] as the main speaker), the characters discuss justice, and whether happiness is associated with acting justly or, rather, unjustly; and rule by a philosopher-king is advocated.

In presenting (in this chapter) a “picture” of a future society, and a scenario (in the next chapter) indicating how that society might be achieved, I am not presenting a *blueprint*. Rather, I am simply pointing in a certain *direction*. My goal is to convince the reader that societal system change is not only necessary but *possible*, doing the latter by presenting a *plausible* sequence of events (in the next chapter). By doing that, my hope is that the reader will take the *possibility* of societal system change seriously, and then begin to act on it.

I make no attempt to present a detailed description of the “look” of a future society, first, because I think that it would be *foolish* to do so—for no one can know what our society will be like in, e.g., 50 years. Second, however, I believe it *unwise* to present a detailed “picture” because doing so would *overly direct* (or bias, if you will) people’s thinking about the future. The advantage of a *brief* sketch is that it can help people believe that our society *can* be changed as the result of planned efforts, we don’t have to simply let “nature take its course.” Also, because a brief sketch has potential for “whetting their appetites,” they may then be inspired to develop *their own* ideas regarding the direction we should go, and how to get there.

I insist that the Structured Interaction Group (discussed in Chapter 8) is an ideal vehicle for developing ideas about the future because it can be used to implement the suggestions that I make here, but also be used to develop *other* ideas: It is not an institution that is related *only* to my proposal. It would be foolish of me to suggest that my proposal is the best one conceivable—for I myself would be the first to state that if it were fully realized (which won’t happen!), this would be unfortunate! I’m sure that there are others out there who have the potential to develop ideas at least as good as mine, and a SIG can serve as an incubator for such ideas.

Not only can a SIG do that; participation in a SIG can, I’m convinced, benefit the participants in a variety of ways (some identified in Chapter 8). Given that strong possibility, the SIG can be used not only as a vehicle for creating the New Society, but can be an integral part of that society once it is created. That is, there is good reason to *retain* the institution rather than abandon it, once the New Society has been created.

I see the New Society—in its early phases, at least—as one that uses as its ideal a society of cooperative eco-communities—on the order of the Twin Oaks “intentional: community²⁰³ near Louisa, Virginia. Twin Oaks is a cooperative eco-community (CEC) that has been in existence since 1967. On their website²⁰⁴ is a button for “Policies,” and when one clicks on it, one is presented with a list with six categories of policy, one of which is “Property Code.” Recently I read that Code, and found that I could agree with only some of the points they listed. Therefore, I decided to write a brief statement that would not only present some principles that I believed important for a group (e.g., a Structured Interaction Group) thinking about creating a CEC, but at the same time identify some of the major steps (in order, so far as possible) that would need to be taken in planning a CEC.

I do not myself live in a CEC, and have no experience living in one; therefore, what I write here should not be taken too seriously. I myself regard them merely as “talking points”—i.e., ideas that could provide a basis for discussion by members of a group intent on planning, and building (or having built), a CEC for themselves (or, perhaps, for others). If the presentation that follows helps a group(s) accomplish their goal of planning a CEC in an efficient and productive way, my purpose will have been met.

Below I present both steps and principles, and make no effort to separate the two:²⁰⁵

- The first step would be to decide on the *ownership* question, and here I suggest that all of the community’s real property (i.e., land and structures) be owned by a corporation—so that, in a sense, the community’s residents would all be “renters” (or at least *like* renters).
- The group would next need to decide how to *finance* the community’s creation (i.e., how to pay for the land needed for the community, and how to pay for the construction of any structures that would need to be built).
- Money to meet those expenses could come from the intended residents and/or from individuals/organizations willing to present gifts to the corporation. Money from residents could take the form of outright gifts, the purchase of stock in the corporation, or both. Given that the amount of money available from the above sources might not be enough, solicitation of gifts from members of the Larger Society (individuals and/or

²⁰³ The founders of this community have attempted to cultivate a sense of continuity with earlier “experiments,” and have named their buildings after earlier communal societies. For example, one building is named “Harmony,” after the settlement established, in 1803, near Pittsburgh, by Johann Georg (“Father”) Rapp [1757 – 1847]. In 1814 the Harmonists bought land on the Wabash River in Indiana, moved from the Pittsburgh area, and established New Harmony. Then, in 1824 they purchased a parcel on the Ohio River north of Pittsburgh, and established Economy, selling New Harmony to famed “utopian” Robert Owen [1771 – 1858].

²⁰⁴ www.twinoaks.org.

²⁰⁵ Also see Wendell Berry’s 17 rules for sustainable living:
<http://ukiahcommunityblog.wordpress.com/contact/wendell-berrys-17-rules-for-a-sustainable-economy/>.

organizations) might very well be necessary. Another possible source could be a loan(s), but obtaining a loan might be difficult; and even if some money could be borrowed, it might be advisable to keep this amount low.

- A question inseparable from the financial one is where to build the community, and for what population size—thinking here of the *ultimate* size, rather than the *initial* one. Depending on how these decisions are made, the amount of money needed for creating the community will be affected. In buying a parcel of land, it might be advisable to purchase at a location where additional adjacent land could be purchased at a later time—so that the initial cost of purchasing land could be minimized.
- Assuming that a corporation is formed which becomes the community's owner, and that some of the corporation's initial capital has been obtained by selling stocks, I advise first that stocks be sold only to prospective residents of the community. Second, I advise that all adult members of the community have an equal voice in the community's decision-making, regardless of how much of an investment one had in the community. The number of stocks owned would have relevance only if a need arose to liquidate the corporation, whereupon the proceeds of the community's disposition would be allocated proportional to amount of stock ownership.
- Before an actual purchase of land occurs the intended residents should decide, for the community to be created, how self-sufficient they should try to make it, and what they should, and should not produce. I assume that the individuals involved would be committed to a “voluntary simplicity” existence, which fact would have implications for the decisions they made on these matters. I should add that given impending changes due to global warming, serious thought should be given to developing skills in gathering and hunting—skills that our distant ancestors had.
- In choosing a location for a community, consideration should be given to the strong possibility—probability, actually—of global warming; thus, sites near coasts should be avoided, along with areas projected by climate scientists to suffer severe drought conditions. James Lovelock—writing from an Englishman's perspective—has stated, relative to this: “The northern regions of Canada, Scandinavia, and Siberia, where not inundated by the rising ocean, will remain habitable, and so will oases on the continents, mostly in mountain regions where rain or snow still fall.”²⁰⁶
- The group would need to decide how to meet their housing needs. For example, should one dormitory-like building be created, buildings with several apartments each, or a structure for each family? How would singles and gays be accommodated? What

²⁰⁶ *The Vanishing Face of Gaia: A Final Warning*. New York: Basic Books, 2009, p. 17.

materials should be used, and how should structures be designed? Should earth sheltering be employed, if the site chosen permits this? How much housing space should be allotted to each individual? Who should do the construction? Energy efficiency would presumably be a major consideration in making some of these decisions; more broadly, ecological considerations would play an important role.

- Also prior to “taking the leap” the intended residents should agree that there would be certain necessary tasks to perform; and that although those tasks could not be identified with any precision beforehand, they agreed that all adults would spend an equal number of hours per week in performing those tasks. Exceptions might be made for special cases, but a sharing of the necessary work would be mandatory.
- The group should agree beforehand that specific work “assignments” would be developed once the community had been created. The fact that individuals had different skills and interests would be recognized; but also, an effort would be made to rotate the adult members of the community through the community’s necessary tasks—for concerns other than efficiency should be given primary attention. An attempt would be made to reach a consensus regarding who did what, and when.
- As an individual could spend more than the required number of hours working during a week, this fact would be recognized by recording, for each individual, the number of hours worked during any given week. Despite the fact that some tasks might be more “important” than others, an hour of work doing one task would be regarded as an hour of work doing any other task.
- Although various required tasks would provide employment to residents, I would advise that none of those tasks be hired out to “outsiders.” On the other hand, I have no objections to a resident having his/her own private business—so long as that business is small (i.e., the individual has no employees). Also, I believe it advisable to allow some residents to obtain “outside” jobs. Having such a job would not, however, excuse one from performing one’s “necessary” community tasks. Given that allowing both of these possibilities has the potential of leading to envy on the part of those doing neither, those who take advantage of those opportunities should be sensitive to that possibility. Indeed, I would hope that they would perceive such activities as being done for the sake of the community, rather than themselves. That is, they engaged in the activities, not because they wanted personal gain but, rather, because they received psychological satisfaction from doing so.
- I assume that the community would not only produce for the needs of community members (trying to be as self-sufficient as possible), but would also produce some

excess—but as the result of efficient production, not excessively long hours of work. Initially, this excess would be sold to those on the “outside;” but over time the community would attempt to reduce its dependence on the “outside” (not only in terms of selling, but also buying “inputs” and finished goods). This would be done by contacting nearby CECs, and making arrangements with them for inter-CEC trade. As this occurred, different CECs would be able to develop different specializations, although all would attempt to maintain a certain degree of self-sufficiency and a “voluntary simplicity” way of life.²⁰⁷

- To enable such a development to occur, once a CEC had become established it should work for a proliferation of CECs near its own location, providing whatever financial and technical support it was able to provide.
- At some point in development, some CECs might be able to specialize in providing at least basic medical and dental services, but in the initial stages of development there would be a need for a CEC to provide medical and dental insurance for its residents. Presumably, members would make an effort to eat healthily, get sufficient exercise, and otherwise be interested in their health, so that the need for such services would be reduced. But as one ages, one reaches a point where such care *is* needed. (I’m rapidly getting there myself!)
- I assume that meals would be prepared in a community kitchen, and served in a community hall. This would not only enable the serving of nutritious meals, but enable the realization of efficiencies in food preparation. An attempt would be made to have some variety for each meal, and the special dietary needs of some members would be considered.
- During free time residents would be permitted to engage in whatever (legal) activities they wanted, consistent with the mores established by the community, although cultural activities (forming musical groups, theater groups, etc.) would be encouraged. (As a former French horn player, and lover of classical music, cultural activities are highly important to me.)
- Given that residents have a deep interest in ecological issues, they would recognize that world population growth was a problem, and therefore would agree that a two-child family was preferable—and that adoption was a preferred method for achieving that goal. They would rightly regard eugenics measures abhorrent.

²⁰⁷ <http://www.choosingvoluntariesimplicity.com/>.

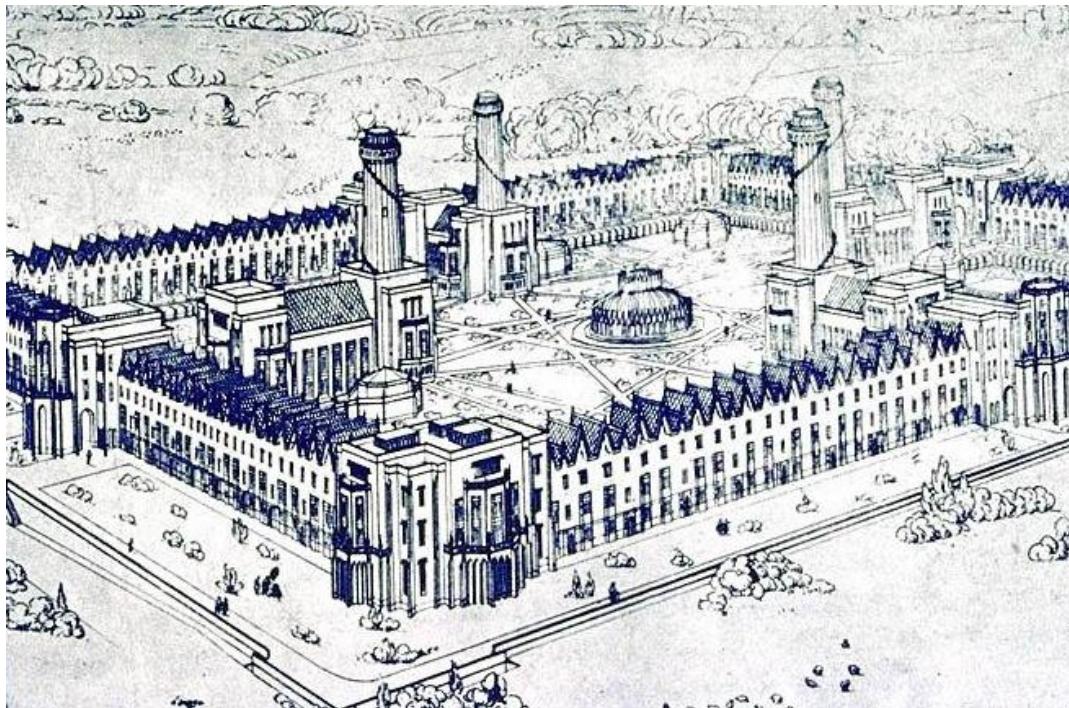
- One type of contact with “outsiders” that might occur is that, given that I perceive a CEC as a secular institution, some members might want to attend a nearby church of their choice. Such a desire should not meet with any objections on the part of the other community residents.
- Residents should recognize that small size has many positive correlates—as Kirkpatrick has pointed out in his massive (!) book on the virtues of smallness²⁰⁸—and keep in mind that the ultimate size of their community should be no more than about 500 inhabitants. Insofar as a given community serves as a temporary refuge for “climate refugees,” this limit might be passed temporarily at times. But if this happens, an effort should be made eventually to reduce the community’s size to a “proper” one again in the near future.
- From a sociological standpoint the efforts of community planners/builders should be to make their community a “family of families.” That is, I see no necessity in abandoning the family as an institution—quite the contrary, in fact. An effort, however, should be made to give the community the feel of a super family. A major problem of contemporary society is that it engenders feelings of insecurity in its inmates; community planners/builders should make an effort to “design for security”—not only in the sense of providing safety to residents, but a feeling of family, belongingness.
- I have no objections to “ecological company towns” (ECTs) being created, so long as they avoid the paternalism, exploitation, etc. of past company towns.²⁰⁹

As the above discussion should make clear, a rather large number of decisions would need to be made before actions could begin, and because many of those decisions would be interrelated, it would not be possible to make them in a clear sequence. Likely discussion would begin on one matter, then switch to another, to still another . . . , with the discussion then coming back to the original subject, with this process continuing until a number of decisions were made—and almost simultaneously. Even after the group had reached a point where they felt comfortable proceeding (in purchasing land, arranging for the construction of buildings, etc.), they still would face many decisions of a practical nature. Only after the community had become established, and had “operated” for some period of time would some routine be established. However, one would hope that life never would become boring for the residents of a given community!

It would be helpful if *Communities* magazine,²¹⁰ or a newly-established magazine, would record the progress of the New Society Movement (NSM), along with providing helpful information to those planning, or already living in, a CEC or ECT.

²⁰⁸ *Human Scale*. New York: Coward, McCann & Geoghegan, 1980.

²⁰⁹ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Company_town.



Robert Owen's [1771 – 1858] Conception of New Harmony (Indiana)

The above is Robert Owen's conception of how his "new moral world" would find physical expression (which it never did). His *The Book of the New Moral World: Containing the Rational System of Society* (1840) can be downloaded from this site:

<http://books.google.com/books?id=9mcOAAAAYAAJ&pg=PR16&dq=robert+owen+moral+order&hl=en#v=onepage&q&f=false>

For a recent (May 2011) discussion of Owen's New Moral World, see Steve Wyler's essay:
http://locality.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/A-New-Moral-World_Steve-Wyler.pdf

²¹⁰ <http://communities.ic.org/>.

Chapter 7. The Good Society: Getting There

I recently discovered—rediscovered, actually—a body of thought that parallels my own somewhat regarding the matter of *whether* planned societal system change can occur and, if so, *how*. This body of thought—European ideas relative to socialism—has never impacted my thinking very much, except for its communitarian variety (as the previous chapter undoubtedly suggests). Nevertheless, it will be useful to begin this chapter with a brief discussion of some of the relevant European ideas.

Before doing so, though, I feel it necessary to declare that there are definite differences between that body of thought and my own, those differences attributable to such factors as my having grown up (a) in Wisconsin rather than, e.g., Germany or England, (b) in a rural/small town environment rather than a major city, (c) in a church-going family (of an evangelical persuasion, in fact), (d) with parents having a Norwegian-Swedish heritage, etc. In addition, the fact that I am writing in 2011 means that the sorts of concerns that I have are unique to this period of time; and my education, independent reading, and life experiences have undoubtedly also played some role in the particular direction that my thinking has taken.

The subject matter of this chapter is *societal system change*, which fact recognizes that some individuals, over the years, have made the normative judgment that the Existing Order is undesirable in various respects.²¹¹ If one makes that judgment, one can ask, first, whether it appears that the society is “naturally” changing in a positive direction,²¹² so that if one is patient, one will find the society becoming progressively “better.” If, however, one makes a *contrary* judgment, one will likely ask what, if anything, can be done to change the direction of the society’s development, so that it will *become* “better.”

If one has made this latter judgment, and is wondering how the society can be improved, one may decide that it would be helpful to study the society’s history,²¹³ with the hope that this will result in the discovery of ideas, clues—even “levers” that can be “pulled”—those ideas or clues or levers then being acted upon, resulting (one hopes!) in the society’s improvement. Which leads me to some of thinking associated with “Socialism,” conceived broadly, a body of thought

²¹¹ It should be obvious that such a perception is what motivated the preaching of the Hebrew prophets (including Jesus, of course).

²¹² The notion of (inevitable) “progress” has been with us for several centuries. See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_progress. Given that technological development usually builds on past advances, such a notion is easy to accept. However, if one reads Eugene Linden’s *Affluence and Discontent: The Anatomy of Consumer Societies* (New York: The Viking Press, 1979)—and Parts II (pp. 63 – 115) and III (pp. 119 – 168) in particular—one may begin to question this notion. (I wouldn’t be writing this book if I didn’t!)

²¹³ Evidently this was *not*, however, the approach used by the ancient Hebrew prophets.

having Karl Marx [1818 – 1883] (and his associate, Friedrich Engels, 1820 – 1895]) as its primary progenitor, and dominant influence, even into this century.

Marx perceived world history (focusing on the West in particular) as consisting of six (6) stages,²¹⁴ three past ones (Primitive Communism, Slavery, Feudalism), one present one (Capitalism), and two future ones (Socialism, then Communism). His hope, of course, was that Capitalism would give way to Socialism, and that eventually the entire world would be able to live under Communism.

For Marx, Great Britain was “the key to a transition from capitalism to socialism.”²¹⁵ However, “Marx and Engels waxed and waned on Britain’s role as the necessary site of the explosion of the capitalist entegument. By 1870 Marx was arguing that the British working class, despite having everything materially necessary for a social revolution, lacked the requisite ‘revolutionary passion’ to fundamentally transform capitalist relations of production.”²¹⁶ However, a more fundamental problem was that “ it was never clear to Marx and Engels how a transition to socialism would be effected at all—oscillating as they did between a conception of the transition as the product of the will of the working class and as a consequence (at times inevitable!) of the development of productive forces; alternating between a conception of their own intellectual practice as a ‘politics of revolution’ and a ‘science of capitalism.’ If they remained consistently ambivalent about the nature of the ‘new historic form,’ then they remained equally equivocal on how it would be realized.”²¹⁷

If Marx and Engels were ambivalent regarding how the transition might occur, a more recent writer—James Burnham [1905 – 1987]—went to the extreme of arguing that such a transition would *never* occur! Burnham argued “that the bourgeois revolution [resulting in the Age of Capitalism] occurred only after a long period during which bourgeois institutions had been built within feudal society. The position of the proletariat within capitalist society, he contended, was altogether different. The proletariat has no way to begin to create socialist economic institutions within capitalism. Hence, he concluded, there would be no socialist revolution.”²¹⁸

²¹⁴ See, e.g., http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marx's_theory_of_history.

²¹⁵ Wade Matthews, “The Poverty of Strategy: E. P. Thompson, Perry Anderson, and the Transition to Socialism,” in *Labour/Le Travail* (Fall 2002). Available at <http://www.historycooperative.org/journals/ltr/50/>. This journal is published by the Canadian Committee on Labour History. Edward Palmer Thompson [1924 – 1993] can be regarded as Marx’s successor in England. See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/E._P._Thompson.

²¹⁶ *Ibid.*

²¹⁷ *Ibid.*

²¹⁸ Staughton Lynd, “Edward Thompson’s Warrens: On the Transition to Socialism and Its Relation to Current Left Mobilizations,” in *Labour/Le Travail* (Fall 2002). Available at <http://www.historycooperative.org/journals/ltr/50/>. For information on Burnham see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/James_Burnham. Staughton Lynd [1929 -] is a contemporary multi-faceted person.

In a 1957 essay—“Socialist Humanism: An Epistle to the Philistines” by E. P. Thompson, however, a more positive position was advanced. “There Thompson asserted that ‘mankind is caught up in the throes of revolutionary transition to an entirely new form of society—a transition which must certainly reach its climax during this century.’”²¹⁹ Thompson turned out to be wrong, of course, but in an essay—“Outside the Whale”—written for *Out of Apathy: Voices of the New Left Thirty Years On* (1960)²²⁰ he “introduced a metaphor central to his view of the transition from capitalism to socialism: the rabbit warren. For a society to be criss-crossed by underground dens and passageways created by an oppositional class is, in Thompson’s 1960s vocabulary, to be ‘warrened.’ British society, he wrote, ‘is warrened with democratic processes—committees, voluntary organisations, councils, electoral procedures.’ In Thompson’s view, because of the existence of such counter institutions, a transition to socialism could develop from what was already in being, and from below. ‘Socialism, even at the point of revolutionary transition—perhaps at this point most of all—must grow from existing strengths. No one . . . can impose a socialist humanity from above.’”²²¹

As one who has lived all of his life in the United States, and barely left the country,²²² I find it somewhat difficult to relate to the ideas and concerns of European intellectuals. By living in Milwaukee (since 1976), however, I have had some exposure to a certain variety of socialism; for during the first half of the last century, Socialists were dominant in Milwaukee: Socialist mayors include Emil Seidel [1864 – 1947], mayor from 1910 – 1916; Daniel Hoan [1881 – 1961], mayor from 1916 – 1940; Carl Zeidler [1908 – 1942], mayor from 1940 – 1942;²²³ and (his brother) Frank P. Zeidler [1912 – 2006], mayor from 1948 – 1960. The Milwaukee socialists have often been termed “sewer socialists” for their emphasis on practicalities and good government.²²⁴ I had the honor of meeting Frank Zeidler shortly after our move (from Ohio) back to Wisconsin in 1976.

Staughton Lynd has noted that in an 1987 article²²⁵ he referred to building “a new society within the old,” and mentioned people in China and Cuba “building small-scale alternative societies,

²¹⁹ *Ibid. (i.e., Lynd’s article).*

²²⁰ Thompson also wrote the Introduction and Conclusion of the volume. It was edited by Robin Archer and other members of the Oxford University Social Discussion Group.

²²¹ Lynd, *op. cit.*

²²² Except to enter Canada in the Niagara Falls area, and travel to southern France while our older daughter was completing her University of Wisconsin-Madison studies at the University of Aix-en-Provence. (We transferred in Brussels, thus were able to spend several hours in Belgium.)

²²³ Carl enlisted in the U. S. Navy in 1942, and was killed at sea.

²²⁴ See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sewer_Socialism.

²²⁵ See footnote 3 in Lynd, *op. cit.*

initiating land reform, health clinics, and literacy.” He then went on to ask: “But how can people take such meaningful small steps, begin such revolutionary reforms, in an interdependent society like that of the United States?”²²⁶

How? I believe that I can provide an answer to that question; in doing so, however, I do so as a person with a background different from any of the individuals mentioned so far in this chapter, and with concerns that reflect both that background and the current world situation:

- Insofar as I have an interest in socialism, it is an interest in the communitarian variety, as espoused by, e.g., François Marie Charles Fourier [1772 – 1857]²²⁷ and Robert Owen [1771 – 1858]²²⁸ (as I indicated in the previous chapter).
- My outlook has been strongly influenced by my church attendance, reading of the Bible, and reading of religious literature.
- Despite the fact that I grew up in the “working class” (my dad being a carpenter), that fact meant little, given that I grew up in a small town/rural environment, in which one comes in daily contact with a variety of people. True, I rarely saw a black, but during the summer my area (of Waushara County) experienced an influx of “Mexicans” (i.e., people from, e.g., Texas, with Mexican ancestry), there to pick cucumbers. I had no difficulty going on to college, and then to graduate school; as a consequence (and in conjunction with my religious upbringing), I never developed a “class consciousness,” and the solution that I offer reflects that fact.
- If my interest in human well-being comes from my perspective on the Bible, it has also been strongly influenced by my reading in the “human design specifications” literature (discussed in Chapter 3, with my ideas on the subject presented in Chapter 4).
- I am convinced that global warming is a reality; that despite efforts at mitigation, the human population will be severely culled (by “natural” factors) by 2100 CE; so that while we most certainly must engage in mitigation efforts, primarily we must engage in adaptive activities. Even then, few of our grandchildren will see the arrival of 2100 CE, I’m convinced.

Despite Lynd’s question quoted above—“But how can people take such meaningful small steps, begin such revolutionary reforms, in an interdependent society like that of the United States?—I believe that it is *precisely* because our society is highly interdependent that it is subject to significant beneficial change. The solution that I offer below is an updated version of an article

²²⁶ Lynd, *op. cit.*

²²⁷ See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charles_Fourier#See_also.

²²⁸ See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robert_Owen.

that I published in 1984 (!), but the ultimate inspiration for that article came from the following passage in Ralph Borsodi's [1888 – 1977] *Flight From the City*,²²⁹ taken from Chapter One ("Flight From the City"):

What are the social, economic, political, and philosophical implications of such a type of living?
What would be the consequence of a widespread transference of production from factories to the home?

If enough families were to make their homes economically productive, cash-crop farmers specializing in one crop would have to abandon farming as a business and go back to it as a way of life. The packinghouses, mills, and canneries, not to mention the railroads, wholesalers, and retailers, which now distribute agricultural products would find their business confined to the production and distribution of exotic foodstuffs. Food is our most important industry. A war of attrition, such as we have been carrying on all alone, if extended on a large enough scale, would put the food industry out of its misery, for miserable it certainly is, all the way from the farmers who produce the raw materials to the men, women, and children who toil in the canneries, mills, and packing-towns, and in addition reduce proportionately the congestion, adulteration, unemployment, and unpleasant odors to all of which the food industry contributes liberally.

If enough families were to make their homes economically productive, the textile and clothing industries, with their low wages, seasonal unemployment, cheap and shoddy products, would shrink to the production of those fabrics and those garments which it is impractical for the average family to produce for itself.

If enough families were to make their homes economically productive, undesirable and non-essential factories of all sorts would disappear and only those which would be desirable and essential because they would be making tools and machines, electric light bulbs, iron and copper pipe, wire of all kinds, and the myriad of things which can best be made in factories, would remain to furnish employment to those benighted human beings who prefer to work in factories.

Domestic production, if enough people turned to it, would not only annihilate the undesirable and nonessential factory by depriving it of a market for its products. It would do more. It would release men and women from their present thralldom to the factory and make them masters of machines instead of servants to them; it would end the power of exploiting them which ruthless, acquisitive, and predatory men now possess; it would free them for the conquest of comfort, beauty and understanding.]

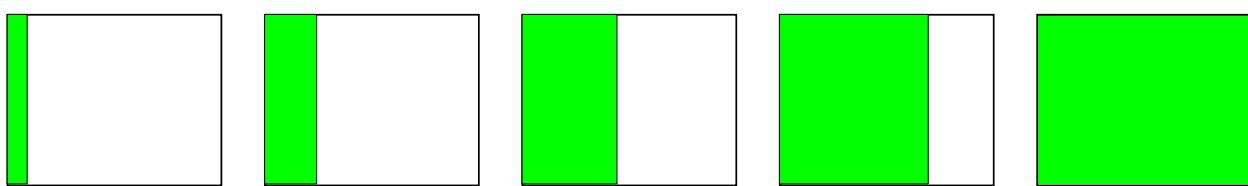
²²⁹ *Flight From the City: An Experiment in Creative Living on the Land*. New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, Inc., 1933. Available at <http://www.soilandhealth.org/03sov/0302hsted/030204borsodi/030204borsodich1.html>.

Before indicating the relevance of this passage for my proposal, let me state the following as my “givens”:

- Our society is rotten, with its stench becoming ever more strong daily.
- It cannot be fixed via political means—electing “better” members of Congress, a “better” president, etc.
- It will get fixed—if it does, that is—only as a result of societal system change.
- That is best accomplished by working at creating a New Society within the shell of the Existing Order, doing so in such a way that the growth of the New Society acts as a cancer relative to the Existing Order. That is, as the New Society develops, that development has the simultaneous effect of “pulling the plug” on the Existing Order.

This last point is especially important, and raises the question: How can development of a New Society have that effect? Let me try to explain.

When I purchase a new automobile, I replace my old vehicle for a new one. Likewise, I conceive the development of a New Society as involving replacement of the Existing Order—the difference with buying a new automobile being that an automobile’s replacement occurs over a very brief process of time, with one entire automobile being replaced by another entire automobile. In the case of *societal* replacement, however, and assuming for a moment that societal size (in terms of population numbers) does not increase over time, what I am referring to here can be conceived as illustrated by the figures below. All of the rectangles below are of the same size, consistent with the (temporary) assumption of an absence of change in population size over time; the green area, however, indicates the *relative* growth of the New Society (relative to the Existing Order) over a period of time (the *length* of that period of time not being specified here). Given the assumption here of societal non-growth, the green area indicates *both* relative and absolute growth. Note that I have chosen to depict five stages so that the figures below coincide with the five stages that I had identified in an earlier article of mine (referenced shortly). In that article I had referred to the five stages using some terminology drawn from migration theory, successively: pull, push, pull, push, and drag (only “pull” and “push,” though, having been so derived).



Stage 1

Stage 2

Stage 3

Stage 4

Stage 5

Here we have our society at five different points in time; the green area representing the New Society portion, the white area the Existing Order portion. What the figures show is the society remaining the same size, in population numbers, over time simply because that has so far been simply *assumed*; and shows that over time the New Society has grown *at the expense of* the Existing Order.

Let's assume that at Stage 1 ("pull") 10% of the population is in the New Society, at Stage 2 ("push") it's 25%, Stage 3 ("pull") 45%, Stage 4 ("push") 75%, and Stage 5 ("drag") 100%.²³⁰ When I say that the New Society has been growing "at the expense of" the Existing Order," I mean that, in effect, the New Society acted as somewhat of a cancer relative to the Existing Order, for its growth has resulted in a diminishment of the Existing Order, eventually "killing" the Existing Order. Unlike actual cancer, however, in this case the "cancer" does not *die* with the "host," it *replaces* the "host"—but, of course, is then no longer a host.

Why would the replacement referred to above occur? The simple (and unenlightening!) answer is that the New Society expands in size by drawing its members from the Existing Order. The above figures are, of course, a simplified version of what might actually take place, in two respects:

- Over time the society would likely change in absolute size: From a short-run standpoint, one might expect that the society would grow in size, but from a longer-run perspective—assuming that global warming results in a severe culling of the population—one would expect the society's size to *decrease*. One would expect that culling would especially occur with those in the Existing Order (so that its shrinkage would be due in part to that fact), but it likely would also occur with the New Society that was developing as well. Which possibility would mean that becoming a part of the New Society would hold with it no guarantees: It would *not* necessarily mean that one might not be subject to premature death, somehow attributable to global warming.
- It's possible that migration might be involved. On the one hand, some of those in the Existing Order might choose to abandon our country for another one. Whether they would have a better chance of surviving in that other country is anyone's guess. On the other hand, however, some might migrate into the New Society from some other country. (It's unlikely—but not impossible!²³¹—that anyone would migrate into the country, and become a part of the Existing Order.)

²³⁰ Please note that these percent values have been chosen arbitrarily.

²³¹ After all, hasn't Paul Craig Roberts referred to our country as a "republic of fools"?!
<http://www.infiniteunknown.net/2009/11/14/paul-craig-roberts-republic-of-fools-the-evil-empire/>.

Of course, *saying* that as the one grows the other contracts is not to offer an explanation of *why* that occurs. To say that the one grows “at the expense of” the other one may be a *true* statement, but that statement fails to clarify the *nature of the process of change*. Thus, I need next to elucidate that process—and it is here where the passage by Ralph Borsodi quoted earlier becomes relevant.

In doing so, it is useful to consider the implications of just *one* member of the society exiting the society. This could occur in either of three ways:

- He accomplishes suicide.
- He migrates to a different society.
- He remains in the society, becoming a gatherer-hunter, either on public or private land (doing so in a way as not to be detected, and thereby not forced to vacate the area within which he is living).

(A fourth option would be to become a homesteader, but that would involve purchasing a parcel of land, the ownership of which would require that he pay property taxes—meaning that he would need to earn some income to pay those taxes, meaning in turn that he had not totally withdrawn from the Existing Order.)

Let’s assume that our hypothetical individual takes the third option (i.e., becomes a gatherer-hunter²³²). The question is: What would be the implications of his exiting the Existing Order for that Order? I would identify three implications (note that I assume that the person had been employed full-time prior to his exiting the Existing Order, and note that my first point actually involves two elements):

- As an employed person he was receiving payment for his services, but certain deductions were being made from his paycheck—including, e.g., income taxes for his state of residence and for the national government. With this person leaving his employer for a new life, the (a) employer has one less employee, and the (b) governments involved are no longer receiving revenue from the person (usually via the employer). The employer, of course, likely would quickly find a new employee to replace the one who had exited, which employee would now be paying in to the two governments. Thus, the exiting of this one person likely would have no effect either on the employer or the two governments.

²³² Granted that in the previous chapter I advocated the creation of cooperative eco-communities (CECs), but at this point I assume a gatherer-hunter sort of economy just for the sake of argument.

- In living in the Existing Order, he was living in a highly interdependent situation—in that he was producing nothing to meet the physical needs of himself and his family. The payments that he received from his employer were used to purchase housing, groceries, clothing, an automobile, etc. With his exiting, however, he was removing himself from this situation of interdependence—no longer patronizing grocery stores, clothing stores, no longer purchasing gasoline for an automobile (which he no longer owns), etc. The stores and service firms that he had been patronizing would, however, hardly notice the loss of this one person’s patronage.

Our hypothetical individual, in living in the Existing Order, was, in effect, a prisoner of that Order. Granted, he had certain freedoms—e.g., a freedom of movement—but was being constrained from exercising his freedoms by (a) a lack of money to make purchases that he would like to make,²³³ and (b) a lack of time for doing what he would like to do. For (regarding the latter) he had to be at the workplace for a certain length of time each day of the week (except for weekend days usually), he had to spend time traveling to and from the work place, he had to spend a certain amount of time traveling to establishments that purveyed various necessities, etc. In other words, he was in a situation of *dependency*, with limited control over his degree of dependency. He might learn to adapt to his situation, but in doing so would be acting against the requirements of his “design specifications.” For this reason, he *might* (if able to remain at least somewhat “in tune” with his nature as a human being) desire to change the nature of his way of life—and in our specific example, he did. In doing so, however, he likely left many behind who wished that an alternative were offered to them which would enable them to change their way of life, but in a less drastic manner than was the case for our hypothetical person.

Let us next assume, then, that such an alternative arises: Some of those currently in the “intentional community” movement,²³⁴ let us assume, have realized (a) the importance of societal system change, (b) that for well-being as well as survival reasons our society needs to move in the direction of becoming a society of cooperative eco-communities (CECs), (c) that members of their Movement (along with, perhaps, Amish²³⁵ and perhaps some other existing

²³³ On the one hand, the “surplus value” that he had been creating had been expropriated by his employer, and the salary/wage that he was being paid was being dictated to him by his employer—who might terminate his employment at any time, leaving him without an income. In addition, his employer might have been a supporter of propaganda efforts on behalf of the ruling class, which propaganda had the effect of producing “false consciousness” in him, thereby minimizing the likelihood that he would be able to think rationally—about his interests, or other matters. His having “false consciousness” would also encourage him to consume to the extent of his ability to consume, to “keep up with the Joneses,” thereby making him a prisoner to the things that he owned. By making purchases on the basis of status rather than utility, he deprives himself of savings which, with enough accumulated, could enable him to change his way of life drastically.

²³⁴ See <http://www.ic.org/>.

²³⁵ That is, the “know-how” that the Amish have developed over the years might prove useful to those joining the Movement; thus, if a given CEC has Amish neighbors, it behooves the residents of that CEC to attempt to establish a relationship with those people. Here in Wisconsin there are many Amish and Mennonites.

groups) are best equipped to provide leadership for this Movement, (d) but also realized that they lack the resources to provide adequate leadership, and therefore have sought—and obtained—backing from some wealthy individuals for the Movement (something Fourier was unable to do!). Thus, members of the existing Movement have engaged in buying suitable land at favorable locations (from, e.g., a global warming standpoint), have been gearing themselves up to be leaders in the expansion of their Movement, and have been advertising for others to join their Movement—perhaps by inviting others to “get their feet wet” by spending a vacation in an existing CEC.

If we now assume that people start joining the Movement, and we are now in Stage 1 (the “pull” stage), what are the implications for the society? The answer: Very little, for too few (only 10 %, I have assumed) have exited the Existing Order as of yet. By the time we have reached Stage 3 (45%), however, the exiting would definitely be felt by the Existing Order:

- Many firms—those with a local market in particular—would have lost so much of their market that they would be forced to close, with those working for them being then forced to find work elsewhere—or at least *try* to find another job.
- Some firms, with the loss of employees, would be forced to (a) move to a different location (perhaps to a different country), to (b) induce people to move to be near them (perhaps from another country—but existing immigration laws may present a hurdle in doing this), or (c) even forced to close—thereby throwing many out of work.
- With people exiting the Existing Order, they would no longer be paying income taxes to state/federal government;²³⁶ with businesses closing, the same would be true. Therefore, governments, in losing their financial support would be forced to cut back in their expenditures; thus, those “feeding off the government trough” (e.g., the many firms that sell items to the military) would be in many cases forced into bankruptcy.²³⁷ With the various firms mentioned above being forced to close, along with those in this latter group, the burden on governments to pay unemployment would become excessive at a certain point. Thus, the society—Existing Order portion, that is—would be beginning to enter a rather chaotic stage.

²³⁶ I assume that most residents of CECs would adopt a “voluntary simplicity” way of life (<http://www.choosingvoluntariesimplicity.com/>), and thereby be paying little, if any, income tax.

²³⁷ The national government, in thereby losing its ability to carry on wars, would be forced to close its hundreds of military bases around the world, and would be forced to stop killing people. Likely, we would then have no enemies—so that the *counter*-terrorists who had been reacting to our *terrorist* activities would likely cease their activities!

Those leading the Movement might be using, as a strategy, some version of my 5-“wave” one (discussed shortly), with its “pull-push-pull-push-drag” feature, but of course they would be free to develop whatever strategy they thought best. But whatever strategy—or combination of such—they would choose to use, my main point here is that as more and more of the population joined the New Society,²³⁸ that joining would have an impact on the Existing Order, eventually causing its collapse.

Nobel prize-winner Paul Krugman started a recent (July 31, 2011) *New York Times* column this way:

A deal to raise the federal debt ceiling is in the works. If it goes through, many commentators will declare that disaster was avoided. But they will be wrong.

For the deal itself, given the available information, is a disaster, and not just for President Obama and his party. It will damage an already depressed economy; it will probably make America’s long-run deficit problem worse, not better; and most important, by demonstrating that raw extortion works and carries no political cost, it will take America a long way down the road to banana-republic status.

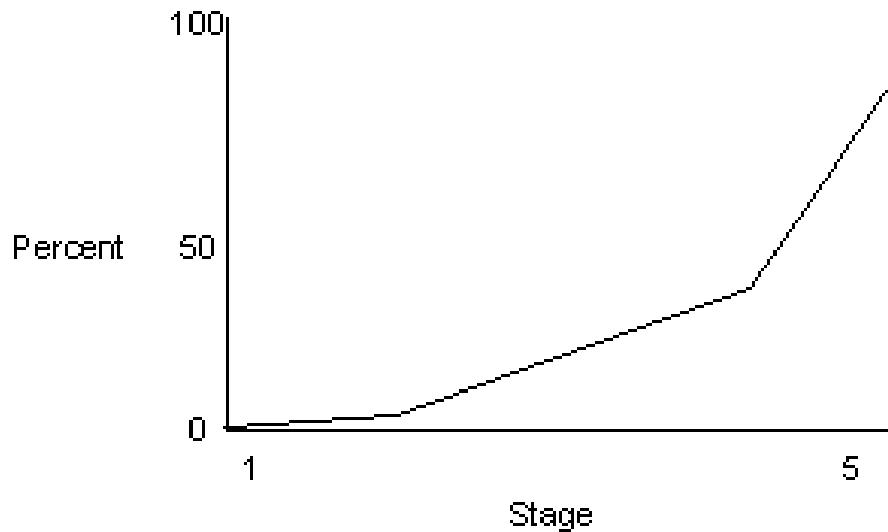
I agree that “if it goes through [which it did],” some of the effects would be those enumerated by Krugman. But I disagree with Krugman that those effects would be “disastrous”—and especially from a long-run standpoint. For “disaster” in the Existing Order has the potential of meaning success for the New Society!²³⁹

If the New Society develops—it had better, or we are doomed!—I suspect that the progress of the Movement would be anything but linear—beginning slow, but at some point growing more rapidly, then at a still later point growing *very* rapidly—something like the following:

²³⁸ My use of “New Society” in this book has perhaps given the impression that I think of the New Society as very homogeneous in character. I wish to emphasize, however, that I most certainly do not! I foresee individual Cooperative Eco-Communities (CECs) being created by members of Structured Interaction Groups (SIGs), and thereby as reflecting the characteristics of those in a given group. In addition, I conceive of the New Society as also containing Ecological Company Towns (ECTS), again each with its own individuality.

²³⁹ That our society *is* currently in a state of disaster is indicated well by Barbara Ehrenreich in her “Nickel and Dimed (2011 Version): On Turning Poverty Into an American Crime.”

<http://www.commondreams.org/view/2011/08/09-3>



How might that progress occur? In 1984 I published a scenario/strategy of societal system change,²⁴⁰ and I will summarize that article briefly here. I began my article with reference to a book that had just been published on “lifestyles,”²⁴¹ because I believed that this book contained some useful categories. I argued that a movement for societal system change would need some “pioneers,” and that two of Arnold Mitchell’s lifestyle categories appeared to be particularly promising for providing such individuals—those in the “Societally Conscious” and “Experiential” categories. Because I had taken a Population course (in the Sociology Department) while a student at the University of North Carolina, I was familiar with the migration concepts of “push” and “pull,” and used those concepts, along with Mitchell’s categories to develop a scenario of societal system change—what I called a “pull, push, pull, push, drag” scenario.²⁴²

As I thought about our society, it occurred to me that retired people might be especially suitable for “Wave” One—the “Societally Conscious” and “Experientials” among them, specifically. For not only do they have incomes independent of jobs; they may at least sense that any technologically-oriented society involves change which renders the old obsolete and worthless—so that they have a good motive for exiting the Larger Society. I was also encouraged by Philip Slater’s statement: “Older adults have a vested interest in finding a place for themselves in the new society, and whatever place they find will provide a model for new-culture adherents as they age.”²⁴³

²⁴⁰ “Ecotopia: A ‘Gerendipitous’ Scenario,” *Transition: The Quarterly Journal of S.E.R.G.E.* (The Socially & Ecologically Responsible Geographers), Vol. 14, no. 2 (Summer 1984), pp. 2 – 8.

²⁴¹ Arnold Mitchell, *The Nine American Lifestyles*. New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, Inc., 1983.

²⁴² Interestingly, at this time I was not aware of the Ralph Borsodi book cited earlier in this chapter.

²⁴³ *The Pursuit of Loneliness: American Culture at the Breaking Point*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1970, p. 143.

Wave Two I also thought of as involving retirees, lower-income ones who might be less well-informed, but individuals dissatisfied with their current place of residence—whether because of dwelling unit quality (lack of!) or an unsafe neighborhood, etc. Because such individuals would likely not be well-informed, they would need to be actively recruited by “First Wavers.”

The New Society Movement (NSM) might now have achieved a sufficient magnitude (in numbers of people involved) that it could attract—as Wave Three—people of *all* ages. I would expect that in particular could “Societally Conscious” and “Experiential” people of “productive” age be attracted to the Movement during this phase. The inclusion of a broader age group would mean, of course, that such issues as child rearing and schooling would now come to the fore.

It is during Wave Four that the Movement could begin to attract significant numbers. During this phase an effort would be made to attract people who are currently “working class.” I say “currently” to emphasize the point that once those individuals would enter the Movement, they would cease being “working class”—because of the basically egalitarian nature of the Movement. If there was a “making of the working class”²⁴⁴ during the Industrial Revolution, there would be an *unmaking* of same during this transition to a New Society.

As my discussion of Ralph Borsodi earlier in the chapter should make clear, with many in the “working class” now being a part of the Movement, those remaining in the Larger Society (no longer that!) would be “dragged” into the Movement. They would, however, be welcomed into the Movement—so long as they relinquished their conviction of being superior, and their habits of domination. This, then, would be Wave Five.

It goes without saying if a process of societal system change were to be initiated along the lines of the about scenario, change would occur in an evolutionary manner that would be unpredictable. My hope is that any such modifications made to the scenario would be of a positive nature, from the perspective of the two goals of (a) addressing the threat of global warming while simultaneously (b) attempting to build a society offering a way of life more in accord with human design specifications.

As this book is addressed specifically (if not exclusively) to Christians, several points of a religious nature are in order here before I turn to addressing possible criticisms of my “plan.” First, in Romans 12:2 Paul admonishes us not to be “conformed” to the values of “the world”—which in *today’s* world would mean don’t be driven by such goals as acquiring as much “success,” wealth, status, fame, and power as one can. Second, an aspect of not being a conformist is not *living* as “the world” does; and regarding this point, Acts reminds us regarding the early followers of Jesus—who called themselves followers of the Way²⁴⁵—that (Act 2:44 – 45) “All the believers continued together in close fellowship and shared their belongings with

²⁴⁴ An allusion to E. P. Thompson’s book with that title.

http://books.google.com/books/about/The_making_of_the_English_working_class.html?id=l2aLyk-kacIC.

²⁴⁵ See Acts 9:2; 18:25 – 26; 19:9; 19:23; 24:22.

one another. They would sell their property and possessions, and distribute the money among all, according to what each one needed.” We modern American Christians might not want to go to the extreme of the early followers of the Way, so far as sharing with others is concerned; but we need to be reminded that communalism is a concept that is not foreign to the Bible—and most certainly was *not* to the early followers of the Way.

Third, Paul in I Corinthians 12 referred to a group of Jesus’s followers as being analogous to a body, which (v. 14) is made up of a number of different parts, all working together. He went on to note (v. 23) that “there is no division in the body, but all its different parts have the same concern for one another.” Although this passage does not explicitly advocate a communal way of life, it implies that Christians would live, relative to other Christians, *as if* they were living in a tight-knit community in which differences were recognized, but those differences were “harnessed” in such a way that they worked for the good of all members of the group. Thus, although many USans might be repelled by communalism—preferring, rather, “American” values—those USans who claim to be Christians should recognize that communalism is an important part of their heritage.

As to criticisms (or potential criticisms) to my plan (besides that it is too “radical”!²⁴⁶), I will identify—and respond—to five here. First, several decades ago Alvin Toffler, in discussing “future shock,”²⁴⁷ was (p. 2) referring to a phenomenon induced “in individuals by subjecting them to too much change in too short a time.” In referring to change as an “elemental force,” Toffler implied that change was irresistible, a virtual law of nature. However, he was somewhat ambivalent regarding the matter of change, for he then went on to add that we must learn to “control the rate of change” in our “personal affairs as well as in society at large,” or “we are doomed to a massive adaptational breakdown.” Toffler failed to make clear here whether he was referring to the *amount* of change that had occurred or the *rate* of change; what he seemed to be suggesting, however, was that the *rate* of change (a) was excessive, (b) could be reduced, and that (c) an effort *should* be made to reduce it.

Toffler’s attitude toward those having difficulty coping with change seemed to be somewhat ambivalent, however. On the one hand it seemed to be somewhat Social Darwinian in that he seemed to perceive those able to cope as the “fit” and those having difficulty coping with change as the “unfit” (used in a pejorative sense). On the other hand, however, he seemed to feel some measure of compassion for the “unfit” because he devoted Chapter 17 (“Coping With Tomorrow,” pp. 319 – 341) to a number of different coping strategies: Direct Coping, Personal Stability Zones, Situational Grouping, Crisis Counseling, Half-Way Houses, Enclaves of the

²⁴⁶ Why is it radical?! See, e.g., John Nichols, *The “S” Word: A Short History of an American Tradition . . . Socialism*. New York: Verso, 2011. As I mentioned earlier, however, the city that I live in has a long history of Socialist mayors; and when I met with ex-mayor Frank Zeidler in the late 1970s, he impressed me more as a good Lutheran than a wild-eyed Socialist!

²⁴⁷ *Future Shock*. New York: Random House, 1970. The term “future shock” was coined by Toffler, and first used by him in an article (1965) in *Horizons* magazine.

Past, Enclaves of the Future, and Global Space Pageants. At least one cannot fault Toffler for not being creative!

Where Toffler came closest to expressing a condescending attitude toward what might be thought of as communities similar to Cooperative Eco-Communities was in his discussion of Enclaves of the Past. (Of course, the comparison is not perfect, because Toffler was writing at a time when global warming was on the “mental maps” of but a few individuals.) Toffler stated that these Enclaves would be (p. 335) communities “in which turnover, novelty and choice are deliberately limited.” Life in these communities would be slow-paced, relaxed, less stimulating (i.e., dull!). Toffler came close to saying that such communities would be created for the slow-witted dregs of society. Given this, his variety of compassion was of a rather peculiar sort—but not one unknown in the history of the West. Toffler added that such communities should not be thought of derisively but, rather (p. 336), “should be subsidized by the larger society as a form of mental and social insurance.” Thus, it appears that from Toffler’s perspective, the people living in such communities would have no value *in themselves*; rather, the communities would house unimportant people, and in effect be mental wards! They had the advantage of being good for the “unfit” people who inhabited them, while simultaneously being good for the society—in that they would provide a sort of insurance for those living in the larger society. Just *how* Toffler did not make clear, however.

Were Toffler writing about the future now, I’m not sure what he would say relative to what he wrote in 1970. But if *Future Shock* is considered in the light of our current world situation, it comes across as a naïve, ignorant book. A book that shows no awareness of The Discrepancy, of “design specifications,” or the threat of global warming. Thus, even if some in our midst might cite Toffler in criticizing my Cooperative Eco-Community “plan,” it would be foolish of them to do so.

Second, some might argue that my “plan” is so radical that it is simply beyond the scope of everyday thinking; therefore, the “plan” has no chance of being taken seriously. I realize that there is merit in such an argument, but would point out that at least since the time of Plato, some individuals have developed critiques of the then-Existing Order, with some of them also devising “pictures” of their concept of a Better Society.²⁴⁸

Third, I would point to those who think my “plan” is “off the wall” that intentional communities have played an important role in American history.²⁴⁹ For example, Dolores Hayden, in her important *Seven American Utopias: The Architecture of Communitarian Socialism, 1790 –*

²⁴⁸ See, e.g., the massive Frank E. Manuel and Fritzie P. Manuel, *Utopian Thought in the Western World*. Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1979.

²⁴⁹ For example, e.g., <http://www.yale.edu/ynhti/curriculum/units/1989/1/89.01.04.x.html> and http://www.wisconsinhistory.org/dictionary/index.asp?action=view&term_id=995&term_type_id=1&term_type_text=People&letter=U.

1975,²⁵⁰ lists (in Appendix B, pp. 362 - 365) 130 such communities. In addition to Hayden's book there are numerous other books (and articles) on the subject, including Edward K. Spann's *Brotherly Tomorrows: Movements for a Cooperative Society in America, 1820 – 1920*²⁵¹ and Donald E. Pitzer, ed., *America's Communal Utopias*.²⁵²

Fourth, skeptics need to be aware of the fact that there is already, and has been for several decades, a Federation of Egalitarian Communities²⁵³ (see also this site.)²⁵⁴ Their web site offers information to those interested in joining an existing "intentional" community, or initiating one; and the *Communities* magazine that they publish also provides valuable information on the subject. In addition, this organization publishes a directory of intentional communities in this country and elsewhere (the 6th edition is the one currently available), which publication gives one a good idea of how many such communities exist, and where. (There are many!)

Fifth, a criticism that might be directed at my proposal is that it is asking them to do something that is just plain "unnatural;" that the "American Dream" is to live in a single-family home, and that most of us do (or at least hope to). What such people need to know is that this "American Dream" was created as part of a propaganda effort on the part of the Hoover administration in the 1930s. "President [Herbert] Hoover organized a national Conference on Home Building and House Ownership in 1931, dedicated to a campaign to build single-family houses in the private market as a strategy for promoting greater economic growth in the United States and less industrial strife."²⁵⁵ Also (p. 283): "Industrialists began to consider the strategy of offering white male skilled workers small suburban homes, to be purchased on home mortgages, as a way of achieving greater industrial order." (Figure 13.1 on p. 283 shows the title page of a booklet put out by Industrial Housing Associates in 1919: "Good Homes Make Contented Workers"!)

A question that might arise with some is: "What about the rest of the world? Other countries will be affected by global warming as well,"²⁵⁶ and what should we do about that fact?" I have three suggestions to make regarding that matter:

- Encourage individuals in other countries to study what we are doing here.

²⁵⁰ Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1976.

²⁵¹ New York: Columbia University Press, 1989.

²⁵² Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 1997.

²⁵³ <http://www.thefec.org/>.

²⁵⁴ <http://www.commonfire.org/community/index.html>.

²⁵⁵ Dolores Hayden, *The Grand Domestic Revolution: A History of Feminist Designs for American Homes, Neighborhoods, and Cities*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1991, p. 275.

²⁵⁶ One might very well argue that the famine that has been occurring in the northeastern part of Africa is the result of global warming occurring there.

- Lend whatever assistance we can to people in other countries—doing so, however, in a sensitive way that does not involve imposing our will on others.
- Cooperating with other country’s governments in addressing the refugee problem that is likely to arise.

What are the prospects for my “plan”? Paul Gilding (formerly head of Greenpeace International) has stated that “As a species, we are good in a crisis . . .”²⁵⁷ When (p. 6) “our backs are against the wall, all the great qualities of humanity, our compassion, our drive, our technical brilliance, and our ability to make things happen on a massive global scale, come strongly to the fore.” When (p. 58) we respond (specifically) to the global warming crisis, “it will be with breathtaking speed and scale, and it will drive the biggest economic and industrial transformation in history.”

Gilding uses (p. 110) “the example of World War II as evidence of what we are capable of, both economically and physically and in terms of sudden political shifts.” Gilding recognizes that, unlike Adolf Hitler, “climate is hard to personify and is something for which we ultimately have only ourselves to blame.” He concludes, however: “But on closer inspection, while there are some real differences, there are not as many as you might think, and there are many lessons and great encouragement in that experience.” “Without the benefit of a retrospective view,” continues Gilding (p. 111), “it would be much harder to predict when exactly the denial of Hitler’s threat would end. So it’s also hard to predict when the moment will come on climate, even though in hindsight, it will be ‘obvious.’”

Gilding has had wide-ranging experiences, and has occupied important positions; therefore, it would be foolish of us to ignore his statements. My thinking, however, has been more influenced by James Lovelock—a genuine, and noted, scientist—and I therefore share Lovelock’s pessimism (without, though, accepting the recommendations that he offers). Besides, I’m convinced that my “plan” is more promising (in potential positive effects) than anything Gilding offers.

Still, the question is whether my “plan” has any chance of being implemented, and this is another area where I am pessimistic. The current political—and general—climate (no pun intended!) in our society seems rather unfavorable for *any* efforts to address this problem: Peter Shumlin (Governor of Vermont) is a rare exception among politicians.²⁵⁸ “Denial” propaganda seems to be given as much attention by the media as solid scientific work. And if my “plan” *does* get initiated, various interests in our society may do all in their power to squelch it. (That such a possibility should be of concern—that we are moving in a police-state direction—is suggested by

²⁵⁷ *The Great Disruption: Why the Climate Crisis Will Bring On the End of Shopping and the Birth of a New World.* New York: Bloomsbury Press, 2011, p. 2.

²⁵⁸ See, e.g., http://www.truthdig.com/report/item/the_gops_sick_priorities_20110712/.

a recent Chris Hedges column²⁵⁹.) In addition, if the “plan” gets initiated, as global warming results in more and more people becoming miserable and desperate, they may use violence against those in the Movement, and in the process destroy it.

If intelligent, enlightened politicians were common in our society, we might be able to minimize the consequences of global warming. But they aren’t; and even if they were, the problem of our “unnatural” way of life would not be addressed—or even recognized, for that matter. The only solution potentially capable of addressing both that problem and global warming is the cooperative eco-communitarian one proposed in the previous chapter. And that is why I am “sold” on this solution—but, again, from the perspective of “Sorelian myth.”²⁶⁰

The above discussion gives one little basis for hope, but there *is* some reason to have hope: The pathetic state of our economy at present—with so many unemployed (likely over 20%²⁶¹), people losing their homes, and many homeless (including many veterans²⁶²)—provides us with a situation such that if an alternative to the prison we currently live in were offered, many might take advantage of that opportunity. In talking with a neighbor recently—who is from northern Wisconsin, and works in construction—I was surprised—pleasantly so!—to learn how close his thinking is to mine, except that his is—currently, at least—more individualistic than mine. This suggests to me that many “ordinary” folk, and perhaps especially those who have grown up in small-town America, could be attracted to my proposal, if presented to them in the right way.

A final point: Solutions have been offered other than the one I offer here (most of them having a technological orientation, with such solutions having been discussed by James Lovelock in *The Vanishing Face of Gaia: A Final Warning*,²⁶³ but you will need to go elsewhere to learn about them. It’s not that I don’t think that such solutions have merit; rather, it’s because a discussion of such options would lead me too far afield from my principal concern, the necessity—and desirability—of societal system change.

²⁵⁹ http://www.truthdig.com/report/item/carlos_montes_and_the_security_state_a_cautionary_tale_20110710/.

²⁶⁰ See the Appendix to Chapter 1.

²⁶¹ See <http://www.eutimes.net/2011/03/real-us-unemployment-rate-may-be-22-percent-for-february/> and <http://www.counterpunch.org/lindorff07112011.html>.

²⁶² <http://www.nchv.org/>.

²⁶³ New York: Basic Books, 2009.

Chapter 8. A Vehicle For Getting There

Our intention was to stimulate interest and *discussion* on physiological techniques that would use the Earth system’s energy and nutrient resources to reverse global warming.²⁶⁴

The primary problem facing us—Americans and humans—at present is the threat of “runaway” (associated with “global warming”), with a secondary problem being that we have, over the centuries, developed ways of life increasingly discordant with the “design specifications” that we acquired prior to the Agricultural Revolution (which began about 10,000 years ago). One might argue that a way out of the first problem lies with the development, and deployment, as soon as possible, of alternate sources of energy, but it’s likely that that solution would only worsen the second problem. The way out of the second problem, I have argued, would seem to be way-of-life change, and I identified as a possible solution that of the development of self-sufficient “intentional” communities (with homesteading as a minor solution). I have noted that moving in that direction holds the *possibility* of addressing both problems simultaneously, but that it is unlikely that that course would be taken by enough people actually to solve either problem. I then left the reader with the likely prospect that our species will be basically extinct before the century is over. (Sorry about that!)

I *do*, however, believe that there is another possible course—one that holds considerable promise, and is a “different sort of animal” than the ones discussed in the earlier chapters. Different, in that it is not offered as solutions *in itself* but, rather, as a *means* to them. What I propose here, then, as a “means” is a special type of discussion group, what I will refer to here as a Structured Interaction Group (SIG).

What led me to this “discovery”? I’m not sure in what *chronological* order the following “events” occurred (likely they interacted one with another in their development, after all), but if I impose a logical order on those “events,” I would need to start by mentioning a growing realization, on my part, that the older I get, the more I recognize how little I know. I know that as one grows older, one supposedly gains in wisdom, but as I grow older (I’m now 71) I’m not even sure about that!

Given this “enlightenment,” I have come to see myself as one of the blind men in the story of the blind men and the elephant. That is, I have come to realize that the total Truth escapes me—but likely also escapes everyone else as well.

²⁶⁴ James Lovelock, *The Vanishing Face of Gaia: A Final Warning*. New York: Basic Books, 2009, p. 148. The “our” here refers to the fact that in 2007 Lovelock and Chris Rapley “suggested the use of a system of large pipes held vertically in the ocean surface to draw up cooler, nutrient-rich water from just below the thermocline.” Italics added (to “discussion”) because the “heart” of this chapter is discussion.

However, I also recognize that each of us possesses *part* of the Truth, so that given that, it would make sense for people to get together in small groups to *share* their truths. The question that then arose was: But what “rules,” if any, should guide this discussion process?

It seemed to me that if discussion is allowed to proceed on a “free-for-all” basis, at least two problems will tend to arise. First, one or just a few individuals will tend to dominate the discussion—their doing so signaling the belief (if but unconscious), on their part, that *they*, and *only* they, have the truth in their possession, and that only *they*, therefore, are important. That is, domination of the discussion by a few individuals conveys the message that we are not all equal—even if those “few” don’t *intend* to convey such a message.

The second problem with “free-for-all” sorts of discussions is that they often become “heated.” Because of that possibility, some members of the group, knowing that this might occur, and feeling intimidated by that possibility, try to prevent it from happening by suppressing their views—so that what they *say* is not in total accord with what they actually *believe*. In addition, if efforts to prevent disharmony fail anyway, so that the discussion starts to become “heated,” what tends to occur is that:

- Any sense of solidarity which may have existed before within the group soon disappears;
- The meeting ends; and
- The group dissolves;—with
- Its participants perhaps then even becoming enemies who cease speaking to one another.

Given the strong possibility that free-for-all discussions might quickly degenerate into heated shouting matches, with the group then disintegrating as a discussion group, I concluded that for a discussion group to “work,” it needed to have some definite structure. In developing—over a period of time—that structure, my inspiration (so far as I can recall) came from three sources,²⁶⁵ the first two of which related to *meetings* rather than to discussion groups *per se*. In addition, they had in common that they had their derivation in Judaeo-Christianity:

- Ideas generated by a “heretical” Christian of the first century named Marcus, and
- Contemporary Quaker (i.e., Society of Friends) practice.

²⁶⁵ I have learned, subsequently, that there is such a thing as “circling.” See, e.g., http://compassionatecenter.org/Discussion_Circles.html. For a book-length discussion of circling see Christina Baldwin, *Calling the Circle: The First and Future Culture*. New York: Bantam Books, 1998. First published by Swan Raven and Company in 1994.

The Marcus in question had created a type of meeting where the speaker of the day was chosen at random from among those attending.²⁶⁶ Use of a random procedure was based on the ancient Hebrew conviction that it is *God* who chooses when selections are made at random (see references to the Thummim and Urim in what Christians refer to as the “Old Testament,” and *Acts* 1:26—where Matthias was chosen to replace Judas.)

Contemporary Quaker practice,²⁶⁷ in contrast, involves members meeting, and waiting for the “Holy Spirit” to inspire someone (i.e., one or more) to speak (or sing and play a melody on a guitar, etc.); during a given meeting, thus, as many speak (etc.) as feel “led” to do so. But in neither Marcus’s meetings centuries ago nor in contemporary Quaker “worship” services did (or does) any *discussion* occur—except perhaps *after* the meeting. Thus, I could not find a *complete* answer in these two sources.

I then turned to a Native American practice, and borrowed the idea of structuring discussion sessions by using a “talking stick” (or feather, etc.). Use of a “talking . . .” in the first place represents an admission on the part of all those present that each is somewhat “crazy” (!), but that a controlled (i.e., “ritualistic”) sort of discussion might help each one become less crazy.²⁶⁸ Second, and related to this, use of this procedure might be conducive to (a) participants speaking what was on their mind, (b) a high degree of equality in how much time each used in speaking, and (c) civil discussions that didn’t get out of hand (among other possibilities—some identified later).

Here’s how this process would work (tentatively):

- Participants meet at some given location and time.
- Each writes his/her name on a slip, and deposits it in a container.
- Someone selected in advance (a functionary whom we might refer to as the King!) picks, at random, a slip from the container. That person becomes the Leader for that session.

²⁶⁶ Elaine Pagels, *The Gnostic Gospels*. New York: Random House, 1979, pp. 41 – 43.

²⁶⁷ My comments here are based on my attendance, with a friend, at but one Friends meeting in Milwaukee.

²⁶⁸ The creators of Feeling Therapy believed that it was necessary that that therapy be created by a group of individuals, rather than just one, so that their individual “crazinesses” would get cancelled out. See Werner Karle, Lee Woldenberg, and Joseph Hart, “Feeling Therapy: Transformation in Psychotherapy,” in *Modern Therapies*, edited by Virginia Binder, Arnold Binder, and Bernard Rimland. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1976, p. 81.

(Whether the belief prevails, within the group, that God was responsible for that choice would be expected to vary from group to group.²⁶⁹)

- The Leader speaks about that which s/he feels “led” to speak (for no more than about 10 – 15 minutes, perhaps).
- The Leader then passes the “talking . . .” to the person on her/his left, and that person reacts to what the Leader has said (striving to be civil, of course).
- *That* person does the same, etc.
- If the discussion starts to become heated, the Leader is expected to ask everyone present to hold hands (and the others present are expected to comply with that request). Why? Because touch *connects* people—not only literally, but psychologically.

If one has been passed the “talking . . .,” but wishes to say nothing (at that point), one simply passes it on. Thus, everyone is given an *opportunity* to speak, but one does not *need* to—unless, of course, one is the Leader for that session! The meeting continues until “time is up”—or no one has anything to add to the discussion.

If the above gives a brief outline of what would be involved (tentatively) with a SIG, I offer the following as more *specific* guidelines:

- Members of the group must accept the above premises and conclusions; i.e., at least *that* much uniformity must exist within the group. They must regard each other member of the group (each other *human*, in fact) as their equal, and accept as a truism that one person's views are as worthy of expression and consideration as those of any other person in the group.
- Each member of the group should have an opportunity to “speak one's truth” and, indeed, ideally all members will speak for about the same length of time during a given session. This ideal likely would never be met, however, because during a given session one or more members may not feel “led” to speak (or speak much)—and certainly one should not feel an obligation to speak just for the sake of speaking. On the other hand, though, if one feels very talkative during a given session, one should attempt to restrain oneself: monopolization of the talking is strongly discouraged (and should, in fact, be *prevented* by the Leader).

²⁶⁹ Just because I derived this idea from ancient Judaeo-Christianity, it doesn't follow that those who adopt the Structured Interaction Group *must* accept that belief. I am not particularly concerned about the belief structure of those who might adopt the SIG; rather, my interest is in it becoming adopted—by as many people as possible, regardless of belief system.

- When one is speaking, one should feel at liberty to say what one genuinely feels “called” to say. Which is not to say, however, that one should resort to vulgarity, or impropriety in some way (e.g., speaking in an undiplomatic manner).
- When one is speaking, one should avoid criticizing others in the group, or trying to discredit what they say. One should show respect for others in the group—keeping in mind the Golden Rule principle, rather than trying to impose one’s own point of view on the others present. If one has a viewpoint that is in opposition to one that someone else has expressed, one should simply state one’s *own* (contrary) viewpoint without comment on what someone else has expressed.
- When one is *not* speaking, one should listen—not just be preparing one’s *own* “speech” for when it is time for one to speak again. One is expected to be (or at least *become*, with time) convinced that one does not possess the whole truth; that, rather, one is like one of the blind men feeling the elephant. So that given that one wishes to know *more* of the truth, one needs to listen attentively to others as they speak.
- To help members of the group acquire the habit of listening to what others say, a short period of silence (roughly 30 seconds?) should be observed after someone has spoken.
- If discussion seems to be proceeding down a certain path “naturally,” one should not (as Leader) try to divert it down some other path—either because one doesn’t like that path, or because one has certain notions of where the discussion *should* head, and believes one has the right to divert the discussion in that direction.
- All should be aware of the danger of the group becoming too “cozy.” Thus, each person present (and not just the Leader) should consider the possibility that at times s/he should act as a (diplomatic) “devil’s advocate” (but only when it is one’s turn to speak—unless one is the Leader for that particular session).
- On the other hand, there is always the possibility that the discussion will start to become “heated.” It is then the Leader’s responsibility to instruct all participants to hold hands (for touch has healing power).
- One should feel free (when it is one’s turn to speak) to introduce (harmless) levity into the discussion, from time to time, if one feels so inclined. In fact, I would encourage people so to do!
- Members of the group must recognize that what is said during a given session is not to be used as a source of gossip. Generally, a rule of confidentiality should be observed; if, however, one chooses to discuss, with non-group individuals, topics discussed during sessions, one is expected to be discreet.

- There is always the possibility that some who join a given SIG group will not “fit in” well. Therefore, a group should decide early on in its existence how it will handle that eventuality.

As a given group gains experience over time, it likely will add to this list of “rules”—or modify some of them. After all, I do not have a patent on the SIG, so that people are welcome to “run with it” in whatever direction they choose. Among those “rules” might be one that specified the ideal size of group, and how to proceed in the event that the “ideal” size becomes grossly exceeded. (My opinion, at this point, is that the ideal size is about 12, but I have not “set that number in concrete.”)

I would, of course, like to see SIGs developed by people interested in addressing the problems identified earlier in this book. But, of course, people are free to initiate SIGs with other purposes in mind as well, and I welcome that.

Regardless of *why* a given group initiates a SIG, I expect that participation in one would result in:

- Learning on the part of all participants.
- Creative solutions to problems—indeed, creativity in more general terms.
- A sense of solidarity developing within the group—especially as the members reach a consensus on some matter.
- A feeling of energy and enthusiasm—indeed, a general sense of well-being—resulting from achieving a sense of solidarity. Indeed, some participants might interpret this feeling of energy as “Spirit-filling,” and may feel like they could “walk on water” (to allude to the story in Matthew 14:22 – 23²⁷⁰).
- Decisions regarding actions to engage in by most, or all, members of the group, followed by actions themselves.
- Etc.

In this age of networking, facebook, etc., means exist to communicate with others without their physical presence. And although I would not discourage people from using these modern means of communication, I would argue that there is no substitute for face-to-face interchange. Thus, SIG sessions would *only* occur in such a situation.

²⁷⁰ This passage was read last Sunday in the Presbyterian church of which I am a member.

Chapter 9. Rethinking Church

As one who has been a churchgoer virtually all of my life, I have come to believe that if one would ask most churchgoers why they attend church, they would respond:

"We're here because,

"We're here because,

"We're here because

"We're here,"²⁷¹

That is, for most churchgoers, their churchgoing seems to be more a matter of habit than the result of purposeful decision-making. And although for some their churchgoing constitutes worship, I suspect that for many churchgoers their attending church services does not involve even that. That, rather, the reasons for attending church include the following:

- “Going to church ‘religiously’ will earn me ‘points;’ and if I earn enough points, I will not be spending eternity in a very warm place.”
- “The pastor has a wonderful personality, and tells amusing stories; I really like him!”
- “The pastor’s sermons have good intellectual content: they are provocative, well-organized, and even well-delivered. They sure beat the mouthings of the drones on the TV news programs!”
- “The building in which services are held is awe-inspiring; I need to get away from the ugliness around me by regularly attending services at such-and-such church. Besides, there is no admission charge!”
- “I haven’t had a chance to play my clarinet since high school days, but because the church has a small orchestra, it has given me an opportunity to get back in the swing of things with my clarinet. Besides, it’s fun to be with the others in that group.”
- “The church’s choir gives me a chance to sing solos. I love to perform, because it makes me feel important: I like it when after the service someone compliments me on how beautiful my voice is.”
- “At my place of employment I’m just another grunt, but the church I attend has all sorts of committees, and I’m the chairman of one of them. Being the ‘boss’ for a change

²⁷¹Thorstein Veblen, *An Inquiry Into the Nature of Peace and the Terms of its Perpetuation*. New York: B. W. Huebsch, 1919, p. 60. First published by The Macmillan Company in 1917.

makes me feel like I'm a human after all, not just a cog in a big machine.”

- “I’m in such a habit of going to church (from my days as a child), that I just don’t feel right if I skip going to church on Sundays.”
- “Going to church gives me a chance to get away from my ‘job’ as a homemaker, and socialize a little.”
- “Given that I’m an alderman in the local government, it’s important that I be seen going to church. Thus, before and after services I try to shake hands and say ‘Hello’ to as many people as I can. That should help me get elected next time around.”
- “I’m from a large family, and most members of the family live here locally. Everyone in the family goes to church, and I would stand out like a ‘sore thumb’ if I didn’t follow suit. In fact, the others would start ‘hounding’ me if I didn’t attend church regularly. And if I stopped going entirely? Well, they would disown me, that’s for sure!”
- “I like to go to church and get involved with church activities because that’s a way of making important contacts. For example, if I can make friends with a plumber who goes to my church, perhaps he won’t ‘screw’ me if I call upon him for his services.”
- Etc.

I’m being overly cynical here, of course—for I know without a doubt that for many, churchgoing is a serious matter, and they pay close attention to the Scripture readings and pastoral message. Still, one must admit that there is at least a grain of truth in these “reasons,” and I am as guilty as anyone for having such “reasons.”

But insofar as the above list *does* represent reality, the reason for it is that societies are *systems*. That is, they are not merely conglomerations of parts; the parts that comprise a societal system are interrelated. And interrelated in such a way that they work together fairly smoothly. Being ultimately comprised of individual human beings, this “working together” is rarely perfect—for the imperfect knowledge, ideology, etc. of those individuals tends to prevent machine-like perfection. However, such imperfections usually do not prevent a societal system to continue in existence over time.

That continuation, though, is not one without change—this especially being true for “civilized” societies (i.e., those that have arisen since the Agricultural Revolution, 10,000 years ago). For not only is a societal system *dynamic* in the sense that interactions among its various components occur continuously. In addition, a given societal system, although seemingly static over a long period of time, undergoes change in character over time—with, e.g., technological developments being a major cause of that change.

At any given point in time one of the society's components tends to be dominant relative to the other components. The fact of societal system change, however, means that the component that is dominant at one point in time ceases to be so at a later point in time. But while a given component *is* dominant, that dominance has importance for the other societal components; for it means that the dominant component exerts a sort of *control* over the other components. That control is not, of course, one that leaders of the dominant component are conscious of; neither is it one that has been *chosen* by them. Rather, it is simply a feature of societal systems undergoing change.

For at least the past 250 years in the West the dominant societal component has been the *Economy*. However, that component has itself experienced significant change during that period, in that initially commercial interests became dominant, then industrial (i.e., manufacturing) interests, and more recently "service" ones (such as retailing and banking).²⁷² Despite these changes in the *specific* economic activities that have assumed a commanding status, as of now it is still the Economy that "reigns."²⁷³

The important implication of that fact—for our purposes here—is that the society's other components all act as "servants" of that dominant component: The "educational" system is geared toward the training (*not* education) of societal members as cogs in the economic machine; sports have an emphasis on competition (rather than cooperation) because the dominant machine needs a dominant societal ethos that is supportive of its efforts; the mass culture helps the inmates of the society to divert their minds away from the workings of the System to "harmless" matters; etc.

Did I forget to mention religion? No, I didn't! For religion—represented in our society especially by various Christian denominations and several Jewish groups—is as much a part of the society as is, e.g., education.²⁷⁴ And the irony here, of course, is that although the Bible (as Chapter 1 demonstrates) is filled with prophetic voices—voices that were highly critical of the then-Existing Order—and those voices are heard (often in a rather muffled form, however) Sunday after Sunday in churches, and Saturday after Saturday in synagogues, the churches²⁷⁵ occupy a subservient role in our society relative to the Economy—just like the other non-Economy components of our society. This subservience gets expressed in various ways, including the fact that the class system associated with our society—whose development was

²⁷² By no means am I suggesting here that Wall Street interests have been providing a service to most of us!

²⁷³ It is my hope, of course, that a transition to a society of cooperative eco-communities will be underway soon, ending Economy's reign.

²⁷⁴ For a recent commentary by a man for whom I have the highest regard—Ray McGovern—see his "They Died in Vain; Deal With It": <http://www.commondreams.org/view/2011/08/08-1>.

²⁷⁵ My focus here is solely on the (Christian) churches, not synagogues, etc.

encouraged by the rise of the Economy²⁷⁶—“spills over” into the religious denominations, especially those of the Protestant persuasion. What I mean here is that different social classes created under Economy’s rule have created their own *church* denominations. (The correlation here is not, of course, perfect, but is high and positive.) The churches, in *reflecting* the existing social class structure, thereby contribute—if but inadvertently—to its continuation.

What other problems can be identified with organized Christianity (thinking here especially of its expression in the United States)? Let me list several—using my perspective on the Bible (as presented in Chapter 1) as the basis for my judgments:

- As I indicated in Chapter 1, the covenant concept found in the “Old Testament” was a “contractual” agreement between God and His people (i.e., the Israelites),²⁷⁷ to this effect: “I have done for you (i.e., I have liberated you from your slavery condition in Egypt), and in return I expect you to do something for Me. What I want you—i.e., you *Israelites as a people*—to do for Me is obey the commandments that I have given to you (the ones with an ethical, well-being orientation in particular).” In Jesus’s time, however, this covenant concept had been given an *individualistic* interpretation, and inverted besides: “I’m doing well, which means that I am being blessed; and the reason that I’m being blessed is that I’m doing God’s will—the fact that I’m doing well proving proving my point.” Note here that the ethical component of the old covenant concept had been simply removed.

Today, both interpretations of the old covenant concept co-exist within Christianity. Obligations are recognized, but there’s also an emphasis on what God can do for *me*, often at the expense of what *I* can do for God. That emphasis involves a subtle, if innocent, inversion of the old covenant concept, but it *is* an inversion nonetheless.

- Associated with this emphasis is one of feeling good—i.e., the idea that what church attendance should do for a person is help her or him feel good—i.e., less “rattled,” nervous, depressed, etc. And whether or not this is planned, and thus intentional, church buildings are often designed to be impressive, thereby engendering a feeling of awe in those who see it from the outside and perhaps also experience its inside; the use of organ music may serve to engender “good” feelings in those who hear it; the beauty of the choir’s singing may have that effect; and other elements of the “service” may also contribute to the sensation of feeling “good.” Thus, these various elements, rather than inspiring one to do for God, may merely help “calm one’s nerves,” etc.
- The prophets and Jesus had an orientation to proper behavior, suggesting that their primary concern was the here-and-now (rather than preparation for an afterlife). In too

²⁷⁶ See, however, <http://eh.net/encyclopedia/article/frey.protestant.ethic> and http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/R._H._Tawney.

²⁷⁷ Actually, it was not a mutually agreed-upon agreement but, rather, one *imposed* by God on His people!

many churches, however, the emphasis is more on a supposed afterlife, with short shrift being given to proper behavior in the here-and-now.

(I need to add here that in referring to a “supposed afterlife,” I am adopted the perspective of Science, and not making a theological statement. However, there is reason for even the scientist to believe in an afterlife, given the evidence provided in the recently-published *Heaven is for Real*.²⁷⁸ My real point here is that it’s possible to be so oriented to the afterlife that one acquiesces to the problems facing us now on earth, without engaging in any effort to address those problems—and doing so is anything but Biblical!

- Accompanying an emphasis on a supposed afterlife, often, is an orientation to orthodoxy rather than orthopraxy. That is, the impression is given that the path to Heaven lies primarily in proper belief *rather than* proper behavior. In effect, then, congregants are excused from engaging in good behavior—this impression reinforced by insistence on the fact that “you are forgiven” (so that you need not worry about the “errors” you make).

If one agrees that the purpose of church meetings should be to help those attending lead “better” lives, and without necessarily being *told* exactly what they should do,²⁷⁹ the question arises: Are the activities associated with church meetings (“services”²⁸⁰) designed so as to accomplish that goal? Which raises the further question: What kinds of activities are associated with a typical church “service”? Here is a partial list, in no particular order (so far as when they occur during a “service”):

- Musical prelude (usually organ or piano music).
- Welcome (by the pastor or a layperson).
- Announcements.

²⁷⁸ Todd Burpo and Lynn Vincent, *Heaven is For Real: A Little Boy’s Astounding Story of His Trip to Heaven and Back*. Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2010. http://www.amazon.com/Heaven-Real-Little-Astounding-Story/dp/0849946158/ref=sr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1312811718&sr=1-1 Disclosure: I have not read the book, and likely never will; I have only read reviews of the book. On the basis of those reviews, it appears to me that although the book provides evidence for the existence of Heaven, the reader may have difficulty determining which statements, in the book, constitute evidence, and which do not. Insofar as the book has this problem, it appears that the co-author—Lynn Vincent—should be blamed for it.

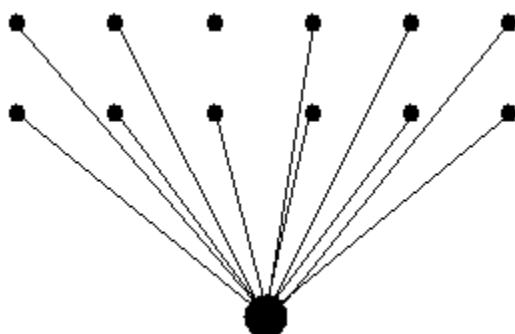
²⁷⁹ Note that a key feature of Jesus’s “ministry” was the telling of stories—i.e., parables. A parable, by its very nature, has no precise meaning. Each hearer of a parable is likely to interpret it in a way that is meaningful to that person. Given this, the suggestion is that one (e.g., Jesus) tells parables because one wants those hearing it to each give their own meaning to it.

²⁸⁰ For me, to call a church meeting a “service” is to border on blasphemy. For no service to one’s fellow human beings occurs during these “services”!

- Prayer requests.
- Pastoral prayer.
- Hymn singing.
- Choir singing.
- Special music (e.g., a violin solo, a trumpet trio, etc.).
- Scripture readings.
- “Minute for Mission.”
- Sermon/homily.
- Musical postlude.

Also, from time to time there may be baptisms, communion, special speakers (e.g., a visiting missionary), etc. And there will be seasonal variations in meetings because special times in the church year, such as Good Friday, Easter, and Christmas.

The question that can—and should—be raised regarding these various activities is: Do they help the congregants become better people? In addressing that question an important fact to note is that for most of those activities the congregants are largely *passive*: They listen to organ (and/or piano) music, they listen to readings, they listen to announcements, they listen to a sermon/homily, etc. They participate in hymn singing, true, but in doing so simply sing a tune composed by someone else, using words written by someone else. They may participate in responsive readings, but will be reading what others have written. Given this largely passive role, it is easy for one’s mind—as a congregant—to wonder; it’s easy, even, to fall asleep!



In the figure above the large circle represents the pastor, the small circles the congregants. Note that a line connects the pastor with each congregant (except for the one who is sleeping!); and although none of the lines have arrows, if I had included arrows at the ends of the lines, they would have point pointing from the pastor to the congregants, not the reverse. Note also that no lines connect congregants with one another—but that's only because I forgot to include lines that would represent one congregant whispering to his or her neighbor during the “service”!

I have no doubt that at least some of the congregants in the typical church “service” benefit from that attendance—in terms of becoming better people. I have attended countless church “services” during my lifetime, and heard many a great sermon from the United Methodist or Presbyterian minister officiating on any particular Sunday. But, I also recognize deficiencies with church “services” (see above); and being from a construction family (my dad was a carpenter, a brother was a civil engineer, another one was an electrician, and still another—the youngest—ran a sawmill) I find it “natural” to be as constructive as I can be, for I have long been convinced that just being critical does more harm than good.

Therefore, my suggestion to the Christian churches is not that they alter their “services” drastically but, rather, recognize the potential of the Structured Interaction Group (SIG, see Chapter 8) and either:

- Make SIGs a part of their “services;” or
- Create SIGs that would meet at other than “church” times in their buildings.

In addition to those suggestions for churches, I recommend that churchpeople create “house churches”—after all, Christianity began with house churches,²⁸¹ each centered on a SIG. And there’s no reason to restrict the SIG to churchpeople, for the SIG is not *intrinsically* a religious institution. Thus, my hope is that there will be a proliferation of SIGs—both religious and secular; and that a primary topic of discussion for those SIGs is societal system change in a positive direction. There is a “crying need” in our society at present for experiences that are both “impactful” and meaningful, and I’m convinced that the SIG qualifies as an institution that can provide such experiences—one reason being that (unlike the typical church “service”) each SIG session would be unique. Therefore, I hope that church leaders come to perceive the value of that institution, and begin to “push” it.

In the well-known story of Jesus walking on water (Matthew 14:22 – 33²⁸²) Peter also tries to do the same, but begins to sink, and calls out to Jesus to “save” him. In making this request, Peter was not referring to a possible afterlife but, rather, to the here-and-now: He was asking Jesus to save him from drowning.

²⁸¹ For an article on this, which has Biblical references, see: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/House_church.

²⁸² This passage was read last Sunday in the Presbyterian church of which I am a member.

The churches today could play a comparable role for humankind, but not saving us from drowning (although that will be one effect of global warming) but, rather, from severe “natural” culling, to the extent of the extinction of our species.

The only question, then, is: *Will* the churches step to the plate (to allude to the fact that I am a Milwaukee Brewers baseball fan)?

A final point: I am by no means alone in believing that the churches can and should play an important role in humankind’s “salvation; from ecocatastrophe. For evidence, see, e.g., the following, which contains numerous links to relevant literature:

<http://daphne.palomar.edu/calenvironment/religion.htm>.