

California Studies in Critical Human Geography

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Spaces of Hope

David Harvey

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Appendix

Edilia, or 'Make of it what you will'

Sometime in 1888, Ebenezer Howard read Edward Bellamy's just-published utopian novel *Looking Backward*. He did so at one sitting and was 'fairly carried away' by it. The next morning he:

went into some of the crowded parts of London, and as I passed through the narrow dark streets, saw the wretched dwellings in which the majority of the people lived, observed on every hand the manifestations of a self-seeking order of society and reflected on the absolute unsoundness of our economic system, there came to me an overpowering sense of the temporary nature of all I saw, and of its entire unsuitability for the working life of the new order – the order of justice, unity and friendliness.

Howard fused the two sentiments. He sought a way to realize Bellamy's vision and promote 'the order of justice, unity and friendliness' that he found so lacking in the London of his day. In 1898, he published, at his own expense (publishers and magazine editors having proven indifferent or hostile), what was later to be called *Garden Cities of Tomorrow*. And so the 'new towns' movement was born, a movement that turned out to be one of the most important interventions in urban re-engineering in the twentieth century.

The end of another century. I walk the streets of Baltimore and am even more appalled than Howard at the lack of justice, unity and friendliness. I say 'more appalled' because now the inequalities are so striking, so blatantly unnecessary, so against any kind of reason, and so accepted as part of some immutable 'natural order of things,' that I can scarcely contain my outrage and frustration. The immense pool of talents of a whole generation has been drained away into festering pits of alienation and anomie, anger and despair, blasé disinterest.

Is there no alternative? Where is that inspiring vision of the sort that Bellamy provided? It is, alas, all too fashionable in these times to proclaim the death of Utopia, to insist that utopianism of any sort will necessarily and inevitably culminate in totalitarianism and disaster. Naturally enough,

our urban problems, when seen through the prism of such cynicism, seem intractable, immune to any remedy within the grasp of us mere mortals. There is, we conclude, 'no alternative' on this earth. We either look for remedies in the after-life or, Hamlet-like, prefer meekly to accept those urban ills we have 'than fly to others that we know not of.'

I retire to my study and browse among my books. I read the critical legal scholar Roberto Unger who complains that all of us have become 'helpless puppets of the institutional and imaginative worlds we inhabit.' We seem unable to think outside of existing structures and norms. We are torn, he says, 'between dreams that seem unrealizable' (the fantasy worlds given to us by the media) 'and prospects that hardly seem to matter' (daily life on the street). I put Unger's book down and pick up another by the philosopher Ernst Bloch who wonders why it is that 'possibility has had such a bad press.' There is, he sternly warns, 'a very clear interest that has prevented the world from being changed into the possible.' So there it is. 'There is no alternative.' I hark back to how often and to what political effect Margaret Thatcher repeatedly used that phrase. I fall into a reverie. 'No alternative, no alternative, no alternative' echoes in my mind. It punnels me into sleep where a whole host of utopian figures return to haunt me in a restless dream. This is what they tell me.

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It will doubtless surprise you to know that by 2020 the revolution was over. In just seven years society underwent such a radical restructuring that it became unrecognizable.

The collapse began early in 2013. It centered on the stock market which rose in the first decade of the century to 85,000 points on the Dow – a level necessary, as many analysts pointed out, to properly service the aspirations of baby boomers like you whose accumulated savings were fueling the rise.

But there were many other signs of trouble. Global warming had kicked in with a vengeance by 2005, creating environmental havoc and crop failures in certain regions. This unleashed a pandemic of infectious diseases, created millions of environmental refugees, and generated a raft of increasingly burdensome insurance claims. Social inequality was severe enough in your time (remember how in 1990, 358 billionaires commanded assets equivalent to 2.7 billion of the world's poorest people?). But by 2010, ten percent of the world's population controlled 98 percent of its income and wealth.

Much of this wealth was spent on building formidable barriers against the poor (far stricter than your modest gated communities). Building barriers to keep themselves out was, indeed, a primary occupation for those who were lucky enough to find employment as common laborers in those

years. But the mightier the barriers, the more the pressure of the years seemed to constitute an ever-growing danger.

But it was the stock market crash that unhinged the world. Nobody knows quite how it happened (does one ever?). Stock markets in Russia suddenly collapsed but by then the world was used to events of this sort (recall Indonesia or even Russia in 1998?). The general expectation was that another round of forced austerity (pushed by the world's central banks) coupled with financial jiggery-pokery would be sufficient to cure the problem.

However, some of the affluent baby-boomers decided it was time to cash in. As they did so the market fell and the more it fell the more others tried to cash in before it was too late.

For some four months, governments and central banks pumped in enough liquidity to hold markets steady (the Dow held at around 50,000). But then the world was awash with useless paper currencies. Inflation accelerated so that cans of tuna and bags of rice became more legitimate forms of currency than dollars, yen or euros. Interest rates soared into the thousand percent range.

Firms – even profitable ones – went bankrupt in the financial meltdown; and unemployment (in those places where such measures still mattered) soared to levels well beyond those ever before experienced touching even the affluent (you professors really came off badly).

Political power slowly dissolved under the crushing weight of rapid currency depreciations. Governments fell into disrepute and disarray. If the best government is limited to that which money can buy, then, it stands to reason, worthless money buys worthless government.

Private property rights and the artificial scarcities they underpin began to erode before the sheer force of human want and need. The law lost much of its meaning as the power to enforce private contracts evaporated in a maelstrom of entangling indebtedness. The legal system slowly surrendered to brute force since police power could not discriminate between the rights and wrongs of so many unenforceable contracts.

The dam finally broke in early fall of 2013. By year's end the Dow stood at less than 2,000. Pension funds and insurance companies went under as did banks and most other financial institutions. Stock markets disappeared. Paper wealth meant nothing. Baby boomers like you lost their financial security (your pension rights completely disappeared for example). Everyone lost because in the great reform of 2005 people had foolishly accepted that privately funded social security schemes were better than those of governments. This had fueled the march of the stock market just as it was now a victim of its collapse.

The military takeover of 2014 was violent. A tough hierarchy of command and administration was devised. Military law and order was ruthlessly imposed upon the world. Dissidents were rounded up and the wretched of the earth were pushed back into their corners and left to suffer and die under the fearful and malevolent eye of the military apparatus.

The generals issued proclamations stating that the central problem was overpopulation. Too many people were chasing too few resources. Carrying capacities were everywhere being violated and optimal populations (calculated by certain ecologists of your time to stand at no more than one hundred million for the United States) were being grossly exceeded. Regrettable as it may seem, they said, the checks to population growth that Malthus had described in his famous essay on population (published first in 1798), principally those of famine, disease, and war, provided the only proper means to bring population and resources back into balance. Only when nature ('red in tooth and claw') had done its work could sustainability be achieved and the natural order be restored.

Thus was the coming anarchy predicted, justified, and managed. The military did, however, lay the groundwork for a complete re-organization and rationalization of social life.

By 2010 the data banks on individuals compiled by credit institutions (already far more highly developed in your times than even you suspected) had been consolidated into one mass surveillance system. To protect themselves, the rich had insisted upon the implantation of electronic surveillance devices into the bodies of those that served them to ensure that nobody unwanted ever ventured into their presence. It became possible to scan individuals and obtain an instant 'bio' on each (imagine the uses to which this was put).

The military universalized this system. Everyone they could round up was electronically implanted and coded. Everyone's location could be monitored from space. This was George Orwell's 'Big Brother' raised to the n^{th} power. Among the revolutionary minded it was regarded as something to be smashed in the name of personal liberty and freedom.

The military also took every technology that lay to hand plus a few more to create a remarkable communications system immune to attack from even the most talented hackers. They similarly established highly efficient and far more ecologically sound systems of transportation. Used for ever tighter forms of surveillance and control, these systems could later be converted to satisfy different needs.

Lacking any clear moral authority or popular legitimacy, the military entered into alliances with religious powers, creating a global system of governance that amounted to militarized theocracies, divided regionally according to religious affiliations (a division that initially sparked massive

and disruptive population movements that made those of 1947 on the Indian sub-continent seem miniscule).

These military theocracies even negotiated, briefly, a period of world unitary governance, calling back an aging George Soros to be the first president of the Concert of the World. But that soon fell apart. The more centralized and hierarchically tight each military theocracy became, the more Darwinian the struggle between them, sparking costly wars of attrition all around the world.

At first, such struggles, invariably depicted on both sides as a struggle against some other evil empire, helped consolidate internal controls by mobilizing nationalistic fervors and religious hatreds. But the falling apart of internal powers of provision made it harder and harder for central authorities to exercise control within localities where people waged the bitter but crucial economic struggle for daily survival.

As the authorities appropriated more and more resources, so local discontents burgeoned. Mini-movements of opposition sprang up everywhere, militating against the corruptions and policies of hierarchical powers, criticizing the authorities for failing to deal with pressing problems of survival. These movements began to organize themselves on a localized basis. They built pioneering collective structures for both survival and resistance. But, unarmed, they were often subject to violent repression.

How exactly it happened remains obscure, but in 2019 these disparate and fragmented movements suddenly came together (some later said through the machinations of some secret society of revolutionary organizers, though there was little evidence for that at the time).

The wretched of the earth spontaneously and collectively rose up. They created a massive movement of non-violent resistance, silently occupying more and more spaces of the global economy, while issuing rapid-fire demands for greater equality, the disbanding of military power, and the impeachment of military and religious leaders.

The authorities viewed this as collective madness. Frustrated and frightened, they launched into irrational and uncontrollable violence, lashing out in fear and loathing at their own peoples as well as against each other. Such actions confirmed rather than diminished the determination of the dispossessed to take control. And in many of those enclaves of opposition and self-support, peoples had already achieved levels of conviction, understanding, and solidarity unparalleled in human history.

Sickened by the egregious violence, elements within the military deserted, as did many holy men who had long sympathized with the people against the authorities. Hierarchical religion and militarism began to collapse. Their corrupt reliance upon each other and their blatant hypocrisy and venality proved their undoing.

Many scientists, doctors, and technicians dropped their support of the militarized theocracies and put their skills at the service of the new movement, at first subversively but then openly as liberated territories began to be defined. Deserting their positions as privileged hacks of a corrupt military theocracy, they launched a movement to reassert the emancipatory and humanizing mission of science, medicine, and learning.

This proved an extraordinary cultural moment (and one which was to be memorable for everyone who participated). While religious authority self-destructed and the hierarchical powers of an absolutist militarized science fell apart, the two most powerful forces with which humans are endowed, those of spiritual commitments and scientific enquiry, merged to found a humanized and politically aware scientific sensibility that was to be the cornerstone of political revolution.

Many intellectuals and artists joined the uprising. Some managers and technicians (particularly those in charge of idle factories) became enamored of the prospects of real change and sporadically led the occupation of their workplaces (factories, farms, and offices), committing themselves to put the productive apparatus back to work for different social ends.

After the military theocracies had been reduced to an illegitimate rump of power, brandishing weapons of mass destruction – and on a couple of terrible occasions actually using them – a peaceful, non-violent mass movement, led almost entirely by women, swept across the globe.

This movement disarmed both the military and the motley array of marauding bands, mafiosi, and vigilante groups that had here and there sprung up to fill the vacuum left by waning military power. Such marauding bands threatened to form an entirely new anarcho-nihilistic social order in which male violence and patriarchy would be the primary source of political authority.

The women's movement that counteracted this threat arose among the billion or so women who, by 2010, formed the majority of the proletariat. It was this feminized proletariat that was to be the agent of historical transformation. These women worked under insufferable conditions of oppression and continued to be lumbered with all the key responsibilities of reproduction (while being excluded, particularly under the military theocracies, from public power).

They everywhere came to call themselves 'The Mothers of Those Yet to Be Born' (a name taken from the first manifesto of such a movement in Buenos Aires published in June 2019). They went from house to house and place to place, destroying every weapon and firearm they could find, ultimately galvanizing a whole army of newly recruited technicians – both men and women – to neutralize and eliminate all weapons of violence and mass destruction. It was a non-violent movement, combining passive

resistance and mass action. It was the most powerful blow of all struck for social equality and mutual respect, albeit in the midst of revolutionary turbulence.

This movement proved the catalyst that turned the world away from centralized hierarchies of power to a politics of egalitarian mass force connecting localities, individuals, and all manner of social groups into an intricate and interactive network of global exchange.

By 2020 much of the world was disarmed. Military and religious authority had slowly asphyxiated in a deadly embrace. All those interests that would prevent the realization of the possible were subdued. People could think about, discuss, and communicate their alternative visions.

And this is the society that the wretched of the earth led by *The Mothers of Those Yet to Be Born* dreamed up and actually made, in alliance with the scientists, intellectuals, spiritual thinkers, and artists who had liberated themselves from their deadening political and ideological subservience to class power and to military-theocratic authority.

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The basic unit of habitation is called a *hearth*. It is comprised of anywhere between twenty and thirty adults and whatever children are attached to parenting collectives called *pradashas* (on which more anon) within it. Each *hearth* forms a collective living arrangement organized as a common economy for mutual self-support.

The members of the *hearth* eat and work together, arriving at collective decisions as to how to organize themselves internally and how to 'make a living' through exchanges with other *hearths*. A *neighborhood* comprises some ten or so *hearths* and a larger organizational unit, called an *edilia*, loosely coordinates activities across two hundred or more *hearths* (roughly sixty thousand people). The largest continuous political unit is a *regiona* comprising anywhere from twenty to fifty *edilias* (at most three million people). The aim is for this to form a bioregion of human habitation that strives to be as self-sufficient as practicable, paying close attention to environmental problems and sustainabilities.

Beyond this there is the *nationa*, which is a loosely organized federation of *regionas* collected together for purposes of mutual barter and trade. It typically comprises at least a couple of *regionas* in each of the tropical, subtropical, temperate, and sub-arctic parts of the world respectively with a similar diversification between continental and maritime, arid and well-watered *regionas*. The statutes of federation are periodically renegotiated and *regionas* sometimes shift from one *nationa* to another as they see fit. Furthermore, new *nationas* can form at will while others dissolve so there is no fixed scale of population nor even any fixed political organization beyond the statutes of federation.

Since the free flow of goods across these ecologically defined *regions* is fundamental to the support of a reasonable standard of living (guaranteeing as far as possible against localized famines and shortages) it also means an equally free flow of people. As a consequence, the degrees of racial, ethnic, and cultural mixing (already much jumbled up during the revolutionary period) make any kind of definition of *national* along ancient lines of race, ethnicity, or even common cultural heritage quite meaningless.

This does not imply homogenization. Indeed, the levels of economic, political, and cultural diversification are astounding compared to your times. But this occurs within an intricate system of mutual self-support and non-exclusionary practices across the whole *nationa*.

Some rough sort of answer has therefore been devised to the dilemma of constructing on the one hand a well-ordered system for the purposes of guaranteeing adequate life-chances for all, while, on the other hand, allowing for that kind of chaotic disorder that provides the seedbed for creative interactions and personal self-realization.

What is interesting about the *hearths* and *neighborhoods*, for example, is the degree to which they achieve a high degree of self-sufficiency and are themselves centers for the creation of cultural and lifestyle diversity. They are centers of intense sociality and cultural experimentation, places where the art of after-dinner conversation, of musical performances and poetry readings, of 'spirit talk' and story telling, are so tenderly cultivated as to make them sites of continuous social engagement (not all of it harmonious by the way!).

They are places where people who want to be different can express that want with the greatest freedom.

Their general manner of organization is symbolized by the physical outlay. The nuclear family home that dominated urban form in your countries and times had to be displaced by some more collective arrangement (the prototype turned out to be some of the structures set up by the polygamous Mormons in the American West in the late twentieth century). Whole city blocks have been converted. Entrances have been punched through dividing walls among the row houses or, in the case of detached housing and sprawling suburbs, walkways and infill rooms have been constructed between the already existing structures to link them into a continuous unit of high-density habitation (liberating some formerly sprawling suburban tracts for intensive cultivation). Larger spaces have been carved out as the common kitchens and eating halls but everyone has their own private room equipped with some basic equipment and within which they are free to use their space as they wish.

Several *hearths* are linked together around a *neighborhood* center that houses both general educational and health care functions. In some

instances we have adapted older town and even city centers to these tasks (though our virulent opposition to any structures higher than four or at most seven storeys meant major transformations in urban design in what used to be called the West). Elsewhere, particular traditional forms and ways of life have been adapted as need be to the new circumstances. *Neighborhoods* are also points of intense social interaction and entertainment (the *edilia*'s centralized store of videos and recordings can here be tapped into at will).

The sheltered areas within the reorganized city blocks are mostly converted into walled gardens – with a few appropriate play-spaces for children and restful arbors for adults – in which all manner of intensive cultivation occurs (producing fruits and vegetables galore) supplemented by glass houses and hydroponic cultivation systems that guarantee a year-round supply of everything from salad vegetables to excellent high quality marijuana (the main recreational drug of choice).

Urban agriculture and gardening is a prominent feature (some derelict land in New York City was used this way in your day). This has both a social as well as an economic significance since many people evidently take pleasure in such activities. On pleasant days the gardens become a venue for a lot of socializing and 'spirit talk.'

Composting of organic wastes is combined with an adaptation of an ancient Chinese system of night-soil circulation (a triumph of biochemical engineering) so that nutrients are re-cycled on both a *neighborhood* and *edilia* basis. You doubtless remember Victor Hugo's comment that 'the history of civilization lies in its sewers' – well, we present our system as evidence of a society well on the way to forming a radically different kind of civilization!

The roofs of the habitations are adorned with solar panels and small wind sails (the effect is somewhat Heath-Robinsonish and would probably not be aesthetically pleasing to you). Powerful batteries store energy in basement areas supplemented by an elaborate system of fuel cells (an innovation perfected by the military). A variety of other local sources of energy are likewise mobilized.

Energy reliance on the outside is generally regarded as debilitating and degrading. Each *neighborhood* has its buried reserve of oil for emergencies. But it is a matter of pride not to use it (replenishment is costly). People often prefer to bundle up (or cuddle up!) in cold weather rather than use up that oil.

Everyone partakes of the tasks within the *hearth*. Cooking, cleaning, and all the other chores are divided up on a rota. Most *neighborhoods* have individuals trained to undertake the maintenance necessary for the physical structure and its electronic systems.

In addition, each *hearth* specializes in some particular kind of production (baking, brewing, sewing, dress and shirt-making, pasta-making, sauces, preserves, etc.) which it exchanges with other *hearths*. (Your expertise in baking and conserving would be put to good use!) The communications system is here crucial. Orders can be placed electronically and surpluses advertised on bulletin boards. Work and exchanges can then be organized on an efficient and waste-minimizing basis.

Particular *hearths* often use their labor credits (these will shortly be explained) to build a specialized stock of raw materials (dried beans, rice, flour, sugar, coffee, cloth, and thread, or whatever) which can be traded to other *hearths* for other produce. A collective store of surplus produce is dispersed among the *hearths* so that the *edilia* is well stocked with several months of basic non-perishable provisions.

Labor is exchanged among the *hearths*. For example, major construction or renovation projects within the *neighborhood* are undertaken by workers of different skills from various *hearths*, though in some instances labor from other *neighborhoods* is 'imported' in exchange for reciprocal engagements at some later date. Computerized balances of labor credits provide a rough accounting measure to ensure fair exchange.

Hearths also acquire fame and reputation according to the generosity and sophistication of the hospitality they offer. The reciprocal exchanges that take place between them in this way have become a vital aspect of social and political life. Competition with respect to generosity towards others is an important value.

The *hearths* might seem to you oppressive to the individual. They are not, of course, conducive to the more blatant forms of individualism to which you are accustomed. But individuals can change *hearths* if they wish. Since the *hearths* are so different in character (they vary according to food preparation styles, musical tastes, cultural expression, traditions, gender mixes) the individual has even more choice of *hearth* type than New Yorkers of your generation had with respect to ethnic restaurants.

The only restraint is that changes should occur on an annual basis and at a given time (the first week of November is the general date of removal). Notice of one month of intention to move is required so that vacancies can be advertised on the computer bulletin board and hopefully filled. Most people choose not to move, but individuals who feel oppressed have the opportunity to do so and some restless individuals (you would probably be among them) never settle for long in any one *hearth*.

This arrangement is supplemented by another important innovation – the institution of 'sabbaticums'. Every seventh year (after the age of seventeen) each and every individual is entitled to spend a year elsewhere (almost anywhere in the world).

Such individuals must commit themselves as full participants of whatever *hearth* they become attached to. But sabbaticums provide a remarkable opportunity to learn and to explore the world in a different way. Many choose not to avail themselves of the opportunity (more than, say, once in a lifetime), but an almost equal number regularly take their sabbaticums with profit and pleasure, sometimes seizing the opportunity to retrain themselves in quite different skills.

Individuals also have their own private resource budget that gives them limited rights to exchange goods and services on their own account outside of the framework of the *hearth* economy. This is a residual from the many local economic trading systems (LETS) that sprang up at the time of the collapse (you even had a few of them in your day).

It amounts to an extensive computerized bartering network. Individuals have to earn their points by providing particular goods and services to others and can then use those points to acquire things or services they need for themselves. Individuals enter into this system at age seventeen when each person receives an initial social endowment, set by the wealth of the *edilia*, which gives them an initial number of points to begin to trade. Inheritance is thereby made a collective rather than a personal and individual good.

Since much of the basic organization of sustenance had been taken over by the collective activities of the *hearth*, individual exchanges have declined somewhat in significance. But there are all sorts of items, such as collectibles and 'vanity' objects, that trade in this way. The appetite for haggling and haggling, for truck and barter, is thereby satisfied. The innumerable 'flea markets' and other informal markets scattered throughout every *edilia* testify to the importance of this activity. It must be said, however, that 'going to market' is now regarded more as an occasion for sociality than serious trade. Objects are often traded more for the opportunity of conversation and social contact than for any thought of economic advantage.

The most prevalent form of this activity (and probably most shocking to your prurient eyes) is the exchange of sexual favors, a practice that deserves a somewhat fuller and franker discussion. In effect, all those 'personal' ads and 'dating networks' that littered the media in your times have been converted into a computerized system for organizing sexual exchanges (were they really ever anything more?).

We fully recognize what should long ago have been obvious: that the relationship between sexual activity on the one hand and the organization of parenting on the other is entirely accidental.

The last-ditch efforts by theocratic powers to keep the family alive as the foundation of the social order were increasingly seen as an exercise in

social control through the tight control over the desires, dispositions, and even functions of individual bodies. The demise of theocracy coincided with the collapse of these controls.

There then followed an intensive debate on how sexual life and parenting activities might be so organized as to displace the dysfunctional and ancient structures of the family (an institution which occasionally worked well in your days but was for the most part the center of violence, abuse, alienation, and, worst of all, neglect of the real needs of children to be raised in secure, loving, and supportive environments).

The solution we have arrived at looks something like this. What are called *pradashas* comprise a number of individuals who bond together in an irrevocable contract for the purpose of raising children. The unit can be of any size but the minimum is six adults and the average is between eight or nine. Instances can be found where the *pradasha* is all male or all female but usually there is some mix of sexes. 'Adjuncts' can also be participants in parenting though they are not bound to the unit in any irrevocable way. They act as grandparents and aunts and uncles once did and can be called upon for help when necessary. The whole is constructed rather like the large extended family of yore, though it is now based on voluntary bonding rather than blood relations.

The formation of a *pradasha* takes a good deal of preparatory negotiation. It brings together people who take great pleasure in the having and raising of children and creates a supportive environment for that activity. The sole focus on child rearing will, we feel sure, shortly pay off, raising children whose psychic make-up and attitudes are totally different from those you are familiar with.

Relations based on affection, love, and respect are fundamental to the well-being of the *pradasha* and this includes sexual relations. But individuals are entirely free to enjoy sexual relations with others (of any sort). To this end an extensive computerized market for the exchange of sexual services exists in which individuals earn points by providing sexual favors for others and spend points on procuring sexual favors from others.

This freedom is accompanied by certain measures that to you would seem draconian. By 2005 a contraceptive system for men had finally been designed and it became possible to insert a small capsule within the blood stream to last for one year.

All men who wish to be placed on the dating network have to submit to this medical procedure from pubescence onwards. Furthermore, careful monitoring of sexual health (sexually transmitted diseases in particular) is now mandatory. The sexual health of any prospective partner is coded into the dating network and available for inspection.

This would, of course, be anathema to your mode of thinking but if one considers the incredible freedoms it confers in other ways then the thought should be more palatable. Indeed, it seems to us that your intense preoccupation with privacy in such matters had more to do with controlling sexual behaviors through fear than with the true protection of individual rights.

Sexual exchanges of this sort have some unintended benefits as well as problems. On the positive side the points system leads to a much greater equality between the sexes with respect to sexual practices. Men, for example, in order to gain points, must build a reputation with respect to the satisfaction of women and the sexuality of the latter has become much more dominant as a result.

The women's movement – many of whose members were forced to participate in the sex trade in order to make ends meet in your times – actually took the lead in setting up this more egalitarian system during its movement for disarmament. They also took the lead, largely out of necessity, in the design of collective systems of child care that later evolved into the *pradashas*.

The exploration of all manner of sexual relations also means the disappearance of categories like 'heterosexual,' 'gay,' and 'queer' since no one particularly holds to such identities anymore but freely roams among sexual practices as they see fit.

The biggest danger is that of sexual obsession – the inability to treat sexuality as a source of pleasure and the desire to use it for possession of the other or for the total merging of personalities. This has proven one of the deepest problems and it has taken a lot of hard work and careful counseling to limit the potential damage that comes from such bad habits.

The balance we now strike between sexual exchanges and parenting works very well. Children are nurtured in the right kind of way, full of love and attention, and the joy of so doing is as widespread as anyone could want. They are no longer viewed as property, as possessions, and their development occurs outside of those awful blandishments of the commodity economy and the struggle for personal advantage that so darkened their lives in your day. The world of parenting is protected from the potentially disruptive and destructive effects of the pursuit and liberation of sexual desires (making all the divorces, extra-marital activities, and prurient public morality of your times a thing of the past).

Parenting is also immune to the damage wrought in your times by crushing demands of a labor market oriented solely to the production of profit rather than to public wants and needs.

This illustrates, however, a more general principle. There can never be a condition of total freedom in any society. Some sort of balance has

always to be struck between individual rights and the personal pursuit of desires on the one hand and collective rights, rules, and obligations on the other. The revolution of 2020 simply changed the balance around relative to that which you now know. It liberates individualism and the pursuit of self-realization in certain directions because it does not fear to constrain them in others.

This shift is nowhere more apparent than in the conversion of the system of personal identifications set up initially by the credit agencies and pressed home by the military. Libertarians wanted to abolish it entirely.

But the women argued it was not a bad thing to be able to know instantly by scanning who one is dealing with. Someone remembered a proposal that democracy might best be served by opening up the data banks to everyone rather than trying to do without them or, even worse, pretending they did not exist. Everyone now knows about everyone else what all credit and government agencies knew in your times (and a good deal more besides). That information is instantaneously scanned between one person and another, so nobody can use it for privileged or authoritarian purposes.

The loss of a presumed (but in practice mainly fictitious) privacy has to be accepted but the gain in individual security is immense. The identity of any perpetrator of some violent act, for example, is immediately known. *Hearts* and *neighborhoods* can become open to all, since all outsiders are easily identified. All social spaces are opened up in hitherto inconceivable ways — security no longer depends upon walls, doors, locks, fences, electronic barriers. It rests on the simple knowledge, available to all, as to who is present where.

Take another example. Free transportation is available to everyone. The efficient and ecologically sound transportation systems devised by the military were put to excellent use to facilitate exchange and movement around the world.

Locally, small electric cars (designed not to travel more than twenty miles and to move no faster than twenty miles an hour) and bicycles are located at the edge of every *neighborhood*. The insertion of a key-card allows any adult to command any vehicle and to plug it back in on arrival at one's destination (the vital key-card is released only on satisfactory reconnection and abuse of any equipment can quickly be tracked down).

Locomotion may be slow and restricted but it is, like sex, free and safe. This also illustrates another important feature of our society. It has generally slowed down rather than speeded up. It has also become notably much quieter: the violent levels of noise pollution that were such a bane in your time have largely disappeared. Of course, in this as in many other

things, considerable variation exists between *neighborhoods* and *edifices* — some of the latter, much beloved by some of the younger generation, are marked by a frenzied style of life and loud and boisterous festivals. Some young people also exercise their love of movement by roller-blading at fantastic (and occasionally, we regret to report, fatal) speeds.

Technological innovation in your times had never really been about lightening the load of labor or making life easier for anyone: it was about gaining profits and pressuring whole populations into behaviors that made them like cyborgs (human appendages of machines both in the workplace and, even more insidiously, in the home). It forced levels of stress to supremely high levels through its relentless pursuit of speed-up and intensification. Emancipation from want, pressures, and needs was not its aim. The prospects for humanizing technical relations were foreclosed. That is how we see it now.

We hold that technology must make life simpler rather than more complicated. Technological change has not stopped. Indeed, there is great emphasis upon it (particularly in areas such as electronics, genetic medicine, which we see as the ultimate cure for many diseases, and materials science) but the rules that govern its application are quite stringent.

Committees evaluate new technologies in the following terms. They must:

1. lighten the load of labor;
2. be environmentally friendly if not beneficial (generating wastes that are non-toxic and easily reused, for example);
3. be less rather than more complicated and therefore more easily used and maintained by all; and
4. be consistent with the ideal that labor is as much a social as a technical activity (technologies that isolate people are less favored than those that bring them together).

Finally, technology should work to the benefit of all, with special emphasis upon the least privileged.

These requirements are not always compatible (as you will doubtless quickly object). So the committees are often hard put to reach a decision. We cannot claim we always judge right. But uncertainty of this sort never hurt anyone and we actually like the challenge.

Another trenchant symbol of change is calendar reform. This had been tried several times before (most notably during the French Revolution) but it never succeeded until now.

The abolition of weekends will doubtless shock you. This happened because of the religious significance of Saturdays and Sundays and the abusive ways theocratic power manipulated whole populations through calls to submission and worship at these times.

We now have a five-day week with six weeks to each month which leaves five days over (six in a leap year) which we insert between June and July as 'Festival Days' — this is an occasion of wild celebration (for which *edilias* and *neighborhoods* prepare assiduously throughout the year). It makes events like your Mardi Gras and the Rio Carnival pale in comparison.

But back to more serious matters! Each adult person is expected to 'work' three of the five days in a week with five hours 'work' a day. Flexibility is built in so individuals can work two days of seven and a half hours, or whatever. This means a workload of around ninety hours per month and, with one month off a year plus a sabbaticum every seventh year, the formal working time of each person over a lifetime is much reduced.

Hearths can also designate ten other days as 'days of ritual.' Most *hearths* use at least four of their days to participate in *neighborhood* and *edilia* celebrations (rather like your street festivals), but the rest remain particular to each *hearth*.

All sorts of occasions are chosen (though it is notable that older religious and mythological rituals — like the day of the dead — are often preserved). The manner of celebration varies from quiet inner contemplation to boisterous 'guest days' where outsiders are bidden to visit, eat, drink, perform, or whatever.

There is another interesting adjustment to the work system. Half the collective labor of a *hearth* is normally allocated to activities organized by the *edilia* or *regiona* in return for needed materials, rights, and services (such as free transportation, machinery and equipment, building materials, etc.). The other half is given over to activities within the *hearth* destined for exchange with other *hearths* (the baking, brewing, sewing, etc. already mentioned).

One of the most important discussions within the *hearth* (and sometimes a cause of bitter dissension) is how to vary these proportions. The supply of labor hours to the *edilia* or *regiona* can be cut down if the *hearth* decides upon lifestyle changes or internal production mechanisms to make it less dependent upon external exchanges.

If the *hearth* wants materials from the *regiona*'s factories or increased rights to transportation, it must send so many more units of labor to the *regiona* in order to get them. But the number of labor credits needed to procure products or services from the *edilia* or *regiona* varies. When labor is lacking at the *edilia* or *regiona* level, it takes a lot more labor credits to procure materials and services from them.

A curious kind of labor market arises. Exchange ratios (measured in labor credits) between *edilias*, *regionas*, and *hearths* fluctuate on a monthly basis.

This system results in occasional instabilities but it generally runs smoothly enough. Most *hearths* provide a steady supply of labor to both *regionas* and *edilias* in return for a steady supply of credits to be used to procure whatever they need.

The occasional shortages that result are an occasion for loud complaints. But they also have the positive effect of encouraging a lot of recycling (everything from nails to plastics and paper) and reminding everyone that the bad old days (typical of your times) of the throw-away society and instantaneous obsolescence must not return. In any case, such scarcity as exists has the virtue of being equally shared instead of being foisted upon the least fortunate (as happened in your day).

Perhaps the most beautiful aspect of this system, however, is the gradual dissolution of the boundary between work and play. While it is commonly recognized that some formal accounting system is needed for society to function at all, the fact is that active people are active because they enjoy being active and much of that activity is now channeled into pleasurable but productive work.

What once passed as hobbies have become part of production and much of production is organized as if it were a hobby. Gardening and orchard management, education of young children, care of the environment, doing carpentry and small odd jobs of improvement, even major projects to extend or refurbish buildings, as well as cooking and experimentation with cultural forms (painting, mathematics, music, poetry, etc.) are all organized in a way that has nothing to do with 'formal' work requirements and everything to do with the pursuit of a satisfying social life. The *hearths* are forever organizing projects for their own amusement and self-betterment.

In this way the number of formal hours given over to children's education has been much reduced. Children daily accompany adults (most, though not all, of whom enjoy the experience) into the gardens and orchards, into the hot-houses or down to the fishponds, into the workshops, or wherever. They do practical work while learning about botany, biology, principles of agronomy, mechanical arts, and the like.

There are no formal places of worship anymore. The churches are converted to other uses — the smaller ones to communal living spaces, others into *neighborhood* centers and still others into large recreation halls (gymnasiums is a much favored activity), or places where concerts, theatrical events, poetry readings, music competitions, and the like can take place. The beauty of such spaces is thereby preserved (you who often listen to musical events in some ancient cathedral will appreciate what we mean).

Music is much loved but it assumes an incredible variety of forms. Remarkably, mathematics and poetry have become connected to it and each so enhances the other as to create a general conception of the poetry

of the universe to which everyone in one way or another subscribes. These three have become the focus of the greatest public celebrations.

The collapse of formal religions does not mean any loss of spirituality. Indeed, people appreciate and admire all forms of 'spirit talk.' And they still read and venerate the religious texts as beautiful stories and as morality tales that contain intense spiritual insights as well as practical lessons.

What we call 'spirit talk' is not confined to preachers or learned individuals. It is open to all. When the feeling strikes, individuals communicate their ideas in the home, in the workplace, in the streets, or in any number of public places.

You would doubtless look upon this with horror, imagining that the whole world has been taken over by those street corner ravers you often encounter in New York City. But now this practice has become integral to a way of life that centers upon the convergence of spiritual powers and rational orderings. Individuals can explore with childlike curiosity the realms of thoughts, feelings, and dreams. And they can do so in an atmosphere of the greatest spontaneity.

It may sound as if we lack contentiousness. But that is simply not true. Conflicts and disputes (not only between the spirit talkers who often argue vehemently) are viewed positively rather than suppressed. The dialectics of contention is widely viewed as fundamental to self-realization and social change. There are, however, some remarkable differences in how disputes are formulated, confronted, and resolved.

To begin with, the profession of 'lawyer' has entirely disappeared (a historical event that most of your generation would have devoutly wished even as they were drowning in their own litigiousness). In retrospect we see the legal community as a prime culprit in hastening the earlier descent into barbarism.

But the traditions of law (like those of religion) have been preserved because they are widely recognized as a crucial preparation for a civilized social life. In the past, however, they always remained just that: a preparation for something that never arrived. So we preserve the traditions of law but dispense with the professions of lawyer and judge.

This attitude carries over into other areas. The universities, for example, have been disbanded. Taken over and administered entirely by large corporate powers by the early years of the twentieth century, they had by 2010 become centers for corporate/military research or for the privileged training of a self-replicating corporate/state elite. The only kind of traditional scholarship tolerated was an obfuscating academicism specifically designed (or so it seemed) to take all pleasure out of learning and to prevent the formation or communication of significant ideas.

But love of learning did not disappear. Now freed of its professionalization it has undergone a remarkable resurgence. Individuals pursue their love of literature, poetry, mathematics, history, geography, science, and the arts (mechanical and technical as well as traditional) in all sorts of ways. They do so in an atmosphere of intense pleasure, enjoyment, and disputation, though always in a manner compatible with their other duties (as carpenters, graphic designers, cooks, or whatever). The supreme art of translation is highly venerated and valued.

Many choose to take a sabbaticum (or even to re-locate full-time) in a particular *neighborhood* or *edilia* where certain groups of people have come together to share a common love of some sort of learning. Others use it to learn the humble craft of translation through total immersion in the ways of living of others.

Young people, who in their seventeenth year are required to spend at least a year away from their *pradasha*, often go to a place where some noted savants have gathered to study, for example, sciences, mathematics, law, religion, totemic systems, or the great literatures of India, China, and Europe. While most information can now be stored electronically, in some *edilias* many old books and manuscripts can be found, along with local techniques of book production that sustain the ancient pleasure that comes with curling up in a corner with a good book.

The abolition of most forms of private property and the transition to property held in common eliminates much of the legal contention that dominated your world, but disputes are frequent and occasionally severe. Some rough rules and customs have arisen for conflict resolution in different arenas.

Disputes that escalate into anger and strife within *pradashas*, for example, are regarded very seriously. The wisdom of experienced individuals within the *neighborhood* or *edilia* is quickly mobilized to dampen such strife.

The whole approach to retribution, justice, and punishment has changed. While transgressions against others (violence in particular) have greatly diminished because the causative seedbed has largely been ploughed under, cases still occur. These are initially viewed as disharmonies within the person committing the act. The response (as used to be the case with the Navaho) is to find means to unravel the upset and restore the harmony.

Persistent offences can lead to sanctions, such as the withdrawal of trading privileges. In extreme cases of persistent offences, banishment to the 'dangerous lands' is possible (a decision made by the *edilia* council).

This means assignment to areas contaminated during the revolutionary wars where life is still perilous. Such areas cannot be abandoned because

the toxicities and diseases fomented there pose serious threats. Commissions and workparties drawn from the *nationas* here collaborate, and the need for a non-volunteer workforce is partly met by individuals banished from their *edilia* in order to work off some punishment for persistent crime and violence.

Disputes between *edilias* or *regionas* are worked out by negotiating committees. At the *regiona* level, most disputes are over trade relations which, by universal agreement, have become based on equality, non-coercion and reciprocity (we have made Adam Smith's theory of perfected markets practical and real, though largely through bilateral agreements). Disagreements on trade matters are routinely disposed of without much fuss.

Global Councils with well-publicized advisory functions exist, however, to consider some rather more difficult issues such as the paths of technological change, production formats, environmental problems, management of those resources (such as biodiversity and the oceans) considered as part of the global commons, and some matters pertaining to disaster relief, population relocations, and the like.

These councils are supposed to alert everyone at all levels, from the *nationas* to the *hearths*, to the existence of common global problems that perhaps require local solutions. Established first in the brief period of World Governance, these councils are now largely advisory and consultative. But they continue to play a highly influential role in formulating agreements between *nationas*.

The system of political representation is extraordinarily simple. We will be brief so as not to bore you too much.

Each *hearth* elects a representative to work on a *neighborhood* council for a three-year non-renewable term. Each *neighborhood* elects a person to serve on an *edilia* council for a three-year non-renewable term, and so on up the scale to the *nationa* which appoints representatives to the Global Councils.

Each level of government above the *neighborhood* can second personnel (no more than 5 per cent of the population) for no more than ten years to work in a technical/administrative secretariat. In such a capacity, individuals can work on scientific/technological commissions or upon research and development as well as upon the improvement of systems of allocation/distribution via the computerized bidding systems and bulletin boards.

But it is a strict rule that all such personnel must attach themselves to a particular *hearth* where they participate in activities in a normal manner (the labor credits they receive for their activities are much appreciated in the *hearth*). The dispersal of such personnel through many *hearths* (and

the periodic geographical shift of commissions and secretariats from one *edilia* to another) ensures strong contact between persons in the *hearths* and those operating at higher levels of governance. We thus avoid that practice, so damaging in your time, of allowing a privileged bureaucratic elite to ghettoize itself and get out of touch with the daily lives, wants, needs, and desires of the people.

Some production activities are orchestrated via the *nationa*. We speak here of things like electronics, silicon chips, metal working, engineering, transportation, communications systems, and textile fiber production. Such sectors are highly automated and require little labor. They are usually organized to combine economies of scale with economies of scope and are able to switch gears quickly from one category of product to another (e.g. silicon chips for different purposes or electronic equipment of different sorts).

There is, therefore, a strong element of what you once condemned as 'undemocratic centralized planning' (dismissed as 'socialistic' or 'communitistic'). Much of this planning is to be found at the *regiona* level and it plays a key role in mixing the need for order in production with the desire for localized disorder as a seedbed for cultural renewal.

Agriculture is likewise divided between large-scale low-labor input systems of production for grains, raw materials, beans, and legumes, and the labor-intensive activities connected with the fishponds, the gardens, and the hydroponic cultivation systems. Management Committees at the *regiona* level struggle to get the balance right between these two sorts of agriculture in an attempt to construct long-term sustainability, self-sufficiency, and sociability.

One excellent side effect has been the shift in preferences towards a much healthier diet based in grains, beans, legumes, vegetables, nuts, and fruits. The meat content (always a preserve of the affluent and a terribly inefficient means to feed people) has been much reduced. This has permitted the abolition of obnoxious and degrading practices developed in your times for the production of beef, veal, and chicken.

Some of the personal habits and values established after the revolution might seem strange or even objectionable to you. Many people became used to somewhat Spartan lifestyles consistent with local self-sufficiency. They also acquired a rather hardened mental attitude to hurt and injury because situations demanded it, even if every effort was made to attend to the physical comfort of someone in pain.

This general attitude has helped avert any return to the self-indulgent hypochondria (bordering on mass hysteria) that characterized the pill-popping elite classes in your times (aren't you on Prozac too?). It also prevents the medical establishment from pandering (as it so patently used

to do) to imagined as opposed to real ills. And it has forced psychoanalysis to return to its roots and accept that the treatment of mental ills lies in the art of intimate, excellent, and probing conversations. A professionalized business has become a general art form.

We consider our medical care highly sophisticated. Every *hearth* has at least two people knowledgeable about minor problems and from *neighborhood to edilia to regione* some sort of hierarchy of information flow and of facilities exists. Many (though not all) of the large-scale hospitals have been disbanded in favor of *neighborhood* caring units.

Health care is oriented more to prevention than to cure. The demand for palliative drugs is much diminished (your own drug industry typically opposed prevention and even cures in order to perpetuate its profits through palliative drug dependency). The other interesting feature is that medical care, understood as an art as well as a science of healing, frequently diverges in qualities and style from one place to another.

While it is generally accepted, for example, that dying with dignity is a right, the manner of so doing varies greatly from the relatively private and quiet to the very social and even boisterous. Death is not feared but understood as integral to life and it is simply not the style to go to extraordinary lengths to prevent it at any cost (as was the case for the privileged elite of your times).

Death is seen as a moment of intense sadness and celebration, the moment of eternal return of the human spirit to its origins and the moment of transmission of all that has been accomplished through a life to another generation. It is the moment for everyone to reflect and take stock, to come to terms with their own life and death, and to recommit themselves to activities and relationships that will be worthy of transmission to future generations.

It is perhaps for this reason that many of us now believe that the spirits of the dead continue to circulate among us, always.

But we must have done with this tale! Out of the many other things that can be said we address only those of the greatest import.

Perhaps the hardest of all things to convey (particularly to a whole generation of sceptics and cynics of your sort) is the spirit that pervades this new social order. It is not as if the will to power, the excitement of performance, the pursuit of passions, or the adventurous curiosity of individuals and groups have been put under wraps. Quite the contrary. All of these elements flourish even as they are channeled down different paths.

It has been, above all, the revolution in values that has made the difference. And in this regard the most important point has been left to last. The absence of money from our world is startling. On this point we have nothing original to say, for it was all so well stated by Sir Thomas

More (in 1516, no less!). You perhaps remember it. Existing society, he argued, is nothing but:

[A] conspiracy of the rich to advance their own interests under the pretext of organizing society. They think up all sorts of tricks and dodges, first for keeping their ill-gotten gains, and then for exploiting the poor by buying their labour as cheaply as possible. Once the rich have decided that these tricks and dodges shall be officially recognised by society – which includes the poor as well as the rich – they acquire the force of law. Thus an unscrupulous minority is led by its insatiable greed to monopolize what would have been enough to supply the needs of the whole population.

But in Utopia:

[W]ith the simultaneous abolition of money and the passion for money, how many other social problems have been solved, how many crimes eradicated! For obviously the end of money means the end of all those types of criminal behavior . . . And the moment money goes, you can say good-bye to fear, tension, anxiety, overwork and sleepless nights. Why, even poverty itself, the one problem that has always seemed to need money for its solution, would promptly disappear if money ceased to exist.

Computerized exchange transactions of the sort pioneered in electronic banking in your times permitted the abolition of the very money exchanges that the system was designed to facilitate. It is now possible to engage in the multiple bartering of services of all sorts, from sexual favors to pots and pans, without using money at all. The whole social world is now turned upside down in such a way that the exchange of meaningful uses as opposed to the senseless pursuit of money power has become the dominant motif of the social order.

The grand debate that we now have is over what is 'meaningful' about a particular use. And here, the huge unanswered question mark that still animates innumerable passions is simply this: 'what can the true nature of human nature truly become . . . ?'

...

I awoke in a cold sweat. Had I had a dream or a nightmare? I prized my eyes open and peered out of the window. I was still in the Baltimore of 1998. But I was unsure whether to be reassured or distressed by the fact.

The dream stayed with me for much of the day. The general picture I was left with was down-to-earth, commonsensical and in some ways very attractive. But there were many elements that left me anxious and nervous the more I thought about them.

Imagine a world with no banks or insurance companies to run our lives, no multinational companies, no lawyers, stockbrokers, no vast bureaucracies, no professors of this or that, no military apparatus, no elaborate forms of law enforcement.

Imagine all those workers freed from their subservience to the pathetic and parasitic activities to which they are now bound. Imagine them cut loose to work on productive tasks in a world where an ecologically friendly technology requires no more than a few hours work a day to take care of basic needs.

Imagine the loss of the frenetic pace of contemporary life and the transformation of those moments of pure enjoyment we now perforce snatch in between pressing obligations into hours of plenitude.

Above all, imagine a world of respectful equality, not only of talents or achievements, but of conditions of life and of life chances — a world, in short, where the ugly habit of shifting the burden of one's support onto the shoulders of others has disappeared.

Imagine a world in which the pursuit of pecuniary advantage no longer matters and the glitter of all that is gold has lost its allure.

The vision was in one sense exhilarating. But the loss of all those usual props to daily life was also terrifying.

I relaxed with my cappuccino. The stock market, after a summer of ups and downs, was at a new high. And I took comfort in the fact that everything I had dreamed was obviously so outrageously and outlandishly foreign to our contemporary ways as to be outside the realm of any possibility. Any discussion on this set of possibilities was bound to get a bad press, I said to myself, 'and rightly so.' It was, after all, a very undialectical tale powered by exactly that kind of implausible apocalyptic scenario I so disliked.

I walk the streets of Baltimore.

Massive monuments to the rich tower oppressively around me. An elaborate state-subsidized welfare system supports hotels, corporations, up-scale condominiums, football and baseball stadiums, convention centers, elite medical institutions, and the like. The affluent build a system of private schools, universities, and medical establishments that are the best in the nation while the mass of the excluded population drown in the miasma of a public sector that is so busy subsidizing the rich that it cannot achieve even elementary standards of performance for the mass of the population.

The suburbs boom with uneological sprawl while forty thousand vacant houses in the city disintegrate and decay. A filthy ozone cloud hovers over the city on warm summer days. Forty thousand IV drug users roam the streets; the soup kitchens are pressed to full capacity (as are the

jails); the food banks for the poor have run out; and the Malthusian specters of death, famine, disease, and the 'the war of all against all' hang like a pall over the streets of the city.

Where is that order of unity, friendliness, and justice which Howard invoked? If my dream had had some aspects of a nightmare then wasn't this reality every bit as nightmarish?

I had always thought that the purpose of More's *Utopia* was not to provide a blueprint for some future but to hold up for inspection the ridiculous waste and foolishness of his times, to insist that things could and must be better.

And I recalled how Bellamy's hero returns to the Boston of 1888 to find it even more appalling than he had ever thought, at the same time as he is mocked and ostracized for talking of alternatives. His contemporary reality turned out to be his nightmare. Is it not just as surely ours?

If, as most of us believe, we have the power to shape the world according to our visions and desires then how come we have collectively made such a mess of it? Our social and physical world can and must be made, re-made, and, if that goes awry, re-made yet again. Where to begin and what is to be done are the key questions.

Looking Backward, Bellamy noted, was written, like now, at a moment 'portentous of great changes.' It was also written

in the belief that the Golden Age lies before us and not behind us, and is not far away. Our children will surely see it, and we, too, who are already men and women, if we deserve it by our faith and by our works.

And when that Golden Age arrives we may finally hope 'to say good-bye to fear, tension, anxiety, overwork, and sleepless nights.'