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EXisting and EXperimental Cooperatives

Dear: Two chapters ago, as a part of my four-part strategy for dealing with religious fundamentalists, I used the section heading: *Exclude theists (i.e., unscientific antihumans) from existing and experimental cooperatives*. In that section and in the subsequent chapter, however, I didn't explain what I meant by "experimental cooperatives". One of the goals of this **X**-chapter is to provide some examples. Also, I want to try to show you a little more about politics in existing cooperatives – in hopes that you might discern how to improve the governance of any cooperative with which you're involved.

To help you appreciate the importance of experimental cooperatives, let me backtrack a bit. In particular, one of the most important ideas in earlier **X**-chapters (which appeared in **X6**, dealing with "Organizational Principles of the Human System") was the idea that John Stewart labeled "evolution's arrow": that the essence of evolution has been cooperation at ever-increasing spatial scales (starting from the cellular size and now extending to the global scale). I tried to summarize the ideas in **X6** with the statement:

> As with other animals, individually we [humans] compete against other individuals (e.g., for mates, in our studies, in a variety of sports against other individuals, to try to get jobs, to "climb in the ranks" at companies or to start our own company, etc.) but also we cooperate (e.g., as friends, in a variety of team sports, marriage, within "our team" at work, as fellow citizens, etc.). Thus, we "mix and match" competition and cooperation, as we see fit – for our own benefit and for the benefit of "our group" (which, in turn, we usually deem to be for our own benefit and/or the benefit of our "families")… In sum, then, the social evolution of humans has depended on the organizational principle that **we learn how to outsmart our competitors, both by capturing the benefits of cooperation and by utilizing the discoveries of relatively few, brilliant innovators…**

As I tried to emphasize in **X6** (and later chapters), critical to such cooperatives are communications. For example, there's no doubt that existing global-scale cooperatives depend on modern communication capabilities, of course including the internet.

Subsequent considerations about how to improve cooperation led to my making the statement:

> …to try to understand resulting organizational principles, considerations about communications and control require turning to the subject of politics. Unfortunately, though, the subject of politics is huge. It's so huge that I want to tackle it just "one piece at a time", as I'll be doing in subsequent **X**-chapters.

In that chapter (**X6**), the "piece" of politics that I addressed was the propensity of humans to split into factions. I pointed out:

> Many such factions compete, argue, and even go to war against other factions. Thereby, such "factionization" of humanity can destabilize the human system, but in other cases, it can promote growth and stability. Thus, on the one hand, the Human System is generally more stable if individuals belong to more than one faction (e.g., communists who are also ecological scientists and avid readers of Shakespeare, or Muslims who are also capitalists and fans of rap "music"). And on the other hand, even confrontations between factions can promote growth, for example, an environmental faction can challenge some industrial faction (e.g., over the release of some environmentally damaging chemical) and the result can lead to not only a safer environment but also a new industry.

In turn, those ideas led me in **X8** to conclude:

> *The Human System is organized (or more appropriately, disorganized) by grouping into factions, with each faction vying to survive in a hostile environment and trying to outsmart competing factions – by capturing the benefits of cooperation (in part by punishing cheaters), by utilizing the advances of relatively few innovators, almost invariably by raping their environment, and by trying to gain advantages through manipulating political processes.*

Turning to more politics, in **X8** I provided a long quotation from an article by Peter A. Corning entitled "The Evolution of Politics".[1] In his article, Corning emphasizes the cybernetic analogy of politics, with 'cybernetics' being defined as "the science of communications and control systems…" He concluded his article as follows:

> …a cybernetic definition of politics is grounded in a biological – and functional – perspective and is related, ultimately, to the biological problem of survival and reproduction in, and for, organized societies. Politics in these terms can be viewed as

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[1] Available at http://www.complexsystems.org/publications/index.html. The article was originally published as a chapter in Franz Wuketits and Christoph Antweiler, eds., *Handbook of Evolution,* Vol. I. Wiley-VCH Verlag GmbH & Co., 2004.

an evolved phenomenon that has played a significant functional role in the evolutionary process; political evolution has been inextricably linked to the synergies that have inspired the "progressive" evolution of complex social systems – in nature and human societies alike…

Though politics as we have defined it here often entails the pursuit of narrow self-interests (in accordance with the realist model), it also takes place within a larger context – the purposes and interests of the collective survival enterprise as an interdependent system (in accordance with the idealist model). Both of these classical renderings of politics have merit; they are not, in fact, mutually exclusive. Indeed, there is an inherent interplay, and very often a tension, between them.

The reality of the human condition is that the "superorganism" is the key to our survival and reproduction, as it has been for millions of years. However, this vision of the "public interest" does not negate or ignore our individual self-interests. Rather, it represents an aggregation of those interests into an immensely complex system of synergies based primarily on mutualism and reciprocity. The superorganism serves our self-interests in a multiplicity of ways; it provides both collective goods and corporate goods. And the public interest consists of preserving and enhancing these benefits.

Accordingly, the "state" has evolved as an instrumentality for "self-government" and the pursuit of the public interest – though its overarching purpose is all too often subverted. Plato and Aristotle apprehended the overarching purpose of the collective survival enterprise (and its inherent vulnerability) in their conception of the *polis*, and Aristotle prescribed a "mixed" government under law as our best hope for ensuring that the public interest would be faithfully served. Plato and Aristotle also recognized that a fair-minded form of "justice" is an essential element of the public interest; this is the only way to ensure the long-term stability and "legitimacy" (the willing consent) of the members of the community. Over the past 2000 years we have added very little to this vision that is fundamentally new, though we have made many important improvements in the "machinery" of self-government.

What is sobering, even dismaying, is that we seem forever to be forgetting and then re-learning this ancient lesson. Witness the former British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, who famously claimed that "there is no such thing as society." The response to her contemptuous remark is that a society exists when people believe it does and act accordingly (or vice versa). Plato and Aristotle, and many others since, have stressed that the political order can be what we make of it. To a significant degree, our actions create self-fulfilling prophecies. If honesty, trust, mutual respect, courtesy and the spirit of compromise are the prevailing norms while deviants are ostracized and penalized, a society and its institutions will likely reflect these values, by and large. Conversely, if the cultural climate encourages deception, vicious partisanship, demonizing opponents, and an uncompromising no-holds-barred attitude toward opposing interests, the social and political environment will more closely fit the paradigms of Machiavelli and Hobbes.

In the final analysis, our politics is a matter of choice, not a mindless reflection of human nature. Thus, if we choose to remain captives of destructive racial, religious, cultural or economic class divisions, shame on us.

In any case, the bottom-line conclusion of Plato and Aristotle remains valid today. For better or worse, our evolutionary future is dependent upon the goods and services that are provided (or not) by the collective survival enterprise, along with the decisions and actions that we undertake collectively (or not) in the public interest. For this reason, the continuing quest for social justice, and the good life, remains the central challenge for every organized society, as well as for each one of us. It is a goal worth striving for, because our own survival, and certainly that of our descendants, may very well depend upon it. Nothing less than our evolutionary future is at stake. To paraphrase the American "founding father," Benjamin Franklin, in the long run either we will survive together or go extinct separately.

In **X9** and **X10** (as well as later chapters), I addressed the concept of "social justice", and I'll return to it in this and the final **X**-chapter.

In summary of the above, the political process (as complicated as it is!) is the way that groups pursue their goals. As I wrote in **X8**,

… ever since the Stone Age, humans (similar to other animals) have formed into "political groups" to try to find intelligent, collective, cooperative solutions to their problems, while each individual in the group continued to pursue his or her trio of survival goals. And I should add that, by "intelligent solutions", I don't mean "just" the kind of intelligence that can solve math problems, build bridges, explore the structure of matter or the universe, etc., but all types of intelligence: analytic, synthetic, artistic… mathematical, practical, interpersonal, social, political…

As I tried to justify in earlier chapters, the prime goal that we humans have always pursued is "simply" to solve our problems more intelligently – and the most intelligent way known is to apply the scientific method, "to try to make sure we're not fooling ourselves." If that's correct, then it follows that much more effort should be expended applying the scientific method in an attempt to improve our political systems. That is, we should be designing, testing, evaluating, redesigning, retesting, etc., new experimental cooperatives, which is the topic that I'll emphasize in these final three **X**-chapters.

ON TESTING EXPERIMENTAL COOPERATIVES

Humans have, of course, been testing experimental cooperatives for at least the past 10,000 years: every marriage, every tribe, every village, and so on, out to and including every nation and now every global-scale organization (i.e., transnational companies, NGOs, the UN, etc.) has been and continues to be a political experiment (and most have been experimental cooperatives). In total there have been and continue to be a huge number (millions, billions?) of such "social experiments."

But from a scientific perspective, a trivially obvious question is: Have the designs and evaluations of such experiments been adequate? And the equally obvious answer to that question is: No! In this chapter, consequently, I want to address some prospects for improved design and evaluations of such social experiments – with acute awareness that any proposed improvement will be resisted by the "cling-ons": the defenders of the *status quo*, especially religious fundamentalists.

"Foot dragging" by religious fundamentalists always has been and continues to be a significant impediment to any attempt to discover better political processes. The reason is clear. Although the goal of all humans seems to be the same (namely, to solve our problems), yet major differences in opinion arise, particularly between scientific humanists and theists (aka unscientific antihumans), because of both differences in identifying what our problems are and how to solve them.

Thus, most theists consider that the problem of paramount importance is related to their "afterlife"; scientific humanists, in contrast, dismiss ideas of any "afterlife" as silly speculations and try to solve problems related to the one life that they, their progeny, and other life forms will have. Theists seek solutions related to their prime problem (i.e., gaining eternal life in paradise) *via* conforming to the dictates of their clerics and their "holy books"; scientific humanists seek solution to problems in this life by application of the scientific method (in essence, by learning from experience) – stated differently, we seek to solve our problems as intelligently as we can.

In the past, humans sought to solve their problems utilizing "whatever it takes", *via* cooperation, if possible, but by coercion, if necessary (e.g., using religions). Usually, the spatial and temporal scales of their problems were local and immediate (starvation, contamination of living quarters, etc.).

Scientific humanists try to solve human problems (including starvation and contamination of living quarters) using scientifically sound procedures and *via* cooperation among humans at appropriate spatial and temporal scales, which in some cases now requires cooperation at the global spatial scale and for inter-generational time scales. All of which brings to mind Mangasarian's perceptive summary, "Religion is the science of children; science is the religion of adults", as well as Karl Popper's:

> Our civilization… has not yet fully recovered from the shock of its birth – the transition from the tribal or 'closed society', with its submission to magical forces, to the 'open society' which sets free the critical powers of man.

As I've reviewed in earlier **X**-chapters (e.g., see the long quotation in **X**-8 from John Avery's book *Space-Age Science and Stone-Age Politics),* the number of problems now facing humanity and the scope of most of them are "mind boggling". Many if not most of our problems are related to the two basic problems of too many people and too much ignorance.

Thus, many of our environmental problems (including pollution, species extinction, depletion of natural resources, etc.) can be related to overpopulation, and many of our "social problems" (unemployment, poverty, child abuse, violence, injustices, wars, etc.) can be related to poor education. In previous **X**-chapters I've addressed many such problems and potential solutions. In this chapter, I want first to address two overarching problems that arise when scientific humanists attempt to solve any such problems, namely, 1) difficulties and recommended limitations of applying the scientific method to solve social problems and 2) problems of group governance. Then, in the final two subsections below, I want to comment on some proposed solutions to the problems of group governance and some of their experimental tests being performed and being contemplated.

1. Difficulties in Applying the Scientific Method to Social Problems
If scientific humanists propose (as they do) to apply the scientific method to solve social problems, then a first step should obviously be to test the hypothesis that the scientific method can be used to solve social problems! That, however, is a hypothesis that isn't trivial to test. In fact, many illustrations are available (e.g., the "experiments" known as fascism and communism) that seem to support the conclusion that the scientific method should NOT be applied to try to solve social problems – at least, not at large spatial and temporal scales (e.g., the USSR's experiment with communism).

The philosopher Karl Popper was among those who expressed serious concerns about large-scale social experiments. His major contributions were to the philosophy of science (recall his recognition, now known as "the Popper Principle", that science progresses by adopting falsifiable principles not yet falsified), but also significant were his ideas about societies, in particular, about "open societies".   From his studies into the philosophy of science (or knowledge or epistemology) he saw that, similar to life, science evolves, with the "natural selection process" in science being *via* criticism, especially criticism derived from the results of additional experiments.

Consistently, Popper was highly critical of large-scale social experiments (such as the experiments he witnessed called fascism and communism), not only because criticisms of the experiments within the affected societies were suppressed (and brutally so in such "closed societies") but also because as "scientific experiments" they were fatally flawed, with too many uncontrolled and uncontrollable variables. A current horrible example is in many Islamic societies: Islamofascists seek to conduct a worldwide experiment in communal tribalism without experimental controls, without criticism, without comparisons, without evaluations of data, and with all such errors allegedly "sanctified" by some magic man (or giant Jabberwock) in the sky – who has been notoriously irresponsible for the failures of all previous experiments conducted in his name.

Popper therefore forcefully argued that future social experiments (e.g., to identify more appropriate cooperatives) be designed more carefully, contain more evaluations and comparisons, and most importantly, be constrained to remain at relatively small scales – until there is unequivocal confirmation that smaller-scale experiments were unmitigated successes! For example, to determine the efficacy of any new type of democracy, it should first be tested, not at a national scale, but at a variety of small scales, such as in a club, company, village, and similar. Results from such small-scale experiments could then be used to try to improve on the next set of similar but improved social experiments at larger scales.

Further, substantial concern has been expressed about even the application of the scientific method to social problems, at least demonstrating that the application isn't universally accepted and, in some cases, suggesting that

such an application is undesirable. Recently, as shown below, Nicholas Maxwell enumerated some of those criticisms and then responds to them.[2]

…those of a more rationalist persuasion may object that science is too different from political life for there to be anything worthwhile to be learnt from scientific success about how to achieve social progress towards civilization:

(a) In science, there is a decisive procedure for eliminating ideas, namely, empirical refutation; nothing comparable obtains, or can obtain, in the political domain.

(b) In science, experiments or trials may be carried out relatively painlessly (except, perhaps, when new drugs are being given in live trials); in life, social experiments, in that they involve people, may cause much pain if they go wrong, and may be difficult to stop once started.

(c) Scientific progress requires a number of highly intelligent and motivated people to pursue science on the behalf of the rest of us, funded by government and industry; social progress requires almost everyone to take part, including the stupid, the criminal, the mad or otherwise handicapped, the ill, the highly unmotivated; and in general there is no payment.

(d) Scientists, at a certain level, have an agreed, common objective: to improve knowledge. In life, people often have quite different or conflicting goals, and there is no general agreement as to what civilization ought to mean, or even whether it is desirable to pursue civilization in any sense.

(e) Science is about fact; politics about value, the quality of life. This difference ensures that science has nothing to teach political action (for civilization).

(f) Science is male-dominated, fiercely competitive, and at times terrifyingly impersonal; this means it is quite unfit to provide any kind of guide for life.

Here, briefly, are my replies.

(a) Some proposals for action can be shown to be unacceptable quite decisively as a result of experience acquired through attempting to put the proposal into action. Where this is not possible, it may still be possible to assess the merits of the proposal to some extent by means of experience. If assessing proposals for action by means of experience is much more indecisive than assessing scientific theories by means of experiment, then we need, all the more, to devote our care and attention to the former case.

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2 His paper, entitled "Can Humanity Learn to become Civilized? The Crisis of Science without Civilization", was published in the *Journal of Applied Philosophy 17*, 2000, pp. 29-44 and is available on the internet. In the quotation I've omitted his references.

(b) Precisely because experimentation in life is so much more difficult than in science, it is vital that in life we endeavour to learn as much as possible from (i) experiments that we perform in our imagination, and (ii) experiments that occur as a result of what actually happens.

(c) Because humanity does not have the aptitude or desire for wisdom that scientists have for knowledge, it is unreasonable to suppose that progress towards global wisdom could be as explosively rapid as progress in science. Nevertheless progress in wisdom might go better than it does at present.

(d) Cooperative rationality is only feasible when there is the common desire of those involved to resolve conflicts in a cooperatively rational way.

(e) Aim-oriented rationality can help us improve our decisions about what is desirable or of value, even if it cannot reach decisions for us.

(f) In taking science as a guide for life, it is the progress-achieving methodology of science to which we need to attend. It is this that we need to generalize in such a way that it becomes fruitfully applicable, potentially, to all that we do. That modern science is male-dominated, fiercely competitive, and at times terrifyingly impersonal should not deter us from seeing what can be learned from the progress-achieving methods of science – unless, perhaps, it should turn out that being male-dominated, fiercely competitive and impersonal is essential to scientific method and progress. (But this, I submit, is not the case.)

Maxwell concludes:

…we need to correct the three blunders of the traditional Enlightenment. This involves changing the nature of social inquiry, so that social <u>science</u> becomes social <u>methodology</u> or social <u>philosophy</u>, concerned to help us build into social life the progress-achieving methods of aim-oriented rationality, arrived at by generalizing the progress-achieving methods of science. It also involves, more generally, bringing about a revolution in the nature of academic inquiry as a whole, so that it takes up its proper task of helping humanity learn how to become wiser by increasingly cooperatively rational means. The scientific task of improving knowledge and understanding of nature becomes a part of the broader task of improving global wisdom.

I agree with both Popper (about the need to constrain the spatial- and temporal-scale of future social experiments until we learn from smaller-scale experiments) and with Maxwell (about the need for "progress-achieving methods of aim-oriented rationality" for new social experiments "helping humanity learn how to become wiser by increasingly cooperatively rational means ").

Consequently, Dear, perhaps you see why I now feel the need to "tiptoe lightly" when addressing the second of my two points (which I'll do below), dealing with tackling problems of group governance. For example, any new "experiments" in democracy should first be tested and evaluated not globally but at relatively small scales (e.g., in cities and counties). Further, perhaps you're beginning to see why I maintained (two chapters ago) that unscientific antihumanists (aka theists) should be excluded from new, experimental cooperatives. When Osama bin Laden and President Ahmadinejad of Iran, for example, call for worldwide Islamic rule (or for that matter, when the Pope or President Bush call for worldwide establishment of their visions of nirvana), my deliberate, moderate, rational reaction to any of them is: "Blow it out your ear!"

2. Problems of Group Governance

In earlier chapters (especially the **P**-chapters and these **X**-chapters) I've repeatedly encountered and commented upon the problems of group governance (or politics), especially those problems exacerbated by organized religions (which, themselves, are another form of group governance). One of the most common and serious problems is that religious groups will advocate a particular policy (opposing legalized abortions, contraceptives, gay unions, sex education in schools, teaching evolution, etc.) based on their leaders' interpretations of their "holy scripture" rather than on empirical research. For example, Catholic, Muslim, and Mormon leaders claim that gay unions will weaken if not destroy families and therefore society, but I've never seen any data that support such assertions.

In previous chapters, also, I've repeatedly commented upon attempted methods to construct governmental systems that can function in spite of such social "factionization". In that regard, varied and valiant attempts were made by the framers of our Constitution (e.g., *via* representative government, division of powers between Federal and State governments, separation of Church and State, introduction of numerous checks and balances, etc.) and by subsequent Congressional and Judicial actions (e.g., anti-monopoly laws, civil rights laws, etc.), but in general, after more than 200 years of additional experiences with our form of government, major inadequacies continue, e.g., in not: providing equality in opportunity and before the law, minimizing violence, constraining the military-industrial complex, adequately protecting the environment, etc. Below, first I want to review a few such problems, examining them from a more general perspective; then, I'll examine some possible solutions.

In general, if a group of people (be it some small community or all humanity) has a problem, then almost by definition of "group problem", members of the group will need to act together to try to solve it. In turn, for members to act together, some method of "group governance" is needed. Some of the options for such group governance include: i) education (or indoctrination) of everyone in the group (e.g., *via* religion), so everyone in the group will want to try to solve the group problem by "independent", individual actions (e.g., if a group agrees that the group's population is excessive, then attempts can be made to educate every couple about the wisdom of having only one child), ii) some "democratic coercion" of the group, such as majority rule with punishments for "cheaters" (e.g., for the case of too many people, couples could be fined for having more than one child), and iii) overt coercion, such as some sort of dictatorial rule (e.g., forcing mothers to have abortions if they become pregnant again). Below, first I want to remind you of some of the problems associated with different types of group governance; then, as I already mentioned, I'll suggest some possible solutions that seem to be sufficiently defensible to recommend that they be tested experimentally (of course starting at small scales and including appropriate evaluations *via* the scientific method).

Consistent with the frequently repeated assessment, "Religion is regarded by the common people as true, by the wise as false, and by rulers as useful", your other grandfather said [here, paraphrased]: "Religion is a way to control the rabble." There are, however, major problems associated with using religion to govern any group (to "control the rabble"), and although I've addressed such problems in previous chapters, maybe it would be useful to briefly review some of them.

• At their base, all organized religions are organized ignorance, without a shred of reliable data supporting their supernatural silliness; therefore, the "philosophical base" of any religious group is ignorance – and it's rare that ignorant philosophies yield wise personal or social policies.

• In most cases, religious leaders are conniving con artists – whose goal is to live off producers in as much comfort as possible. Commonly, religious leaders work with political leaders as a conniving "tag team". Thus, in exchange for being permitted to run their con games, the clerics agree to "bless" the political rulers dictates as being "God's will", or in Arabic, *Insha'allah.* That works well for the people in power (including patriarchs), but not for those at the bottom of the pile (especially women).

- In most case (although there have been exceptions, such as Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King), religious leaders are, although cunning con-artists, otherwise astoundingly dumb and/or ignorant (e.g., all popes, all Islamic imams, essentially all protestant leaders, and so on, including all leaders of the Mormon Church) – and it's rare that any "rabble" will be led well by dumb or ignorant, con-artist leaders.

- Not uncommonly, the rabble can become intoxicated with their religious delusions, leading to such horrors as killing "unbelievers" (i.e., "unbelievers" in their delusions), burning or stoning to death of "witches" (most accurately defined, it would seem, to be women whom the believers want to kill), killing "apostates" (by stoning them to death, in the case of Islam, and by cutting their throats, in the case of early Mormonism), and of course, the uncountable horrors of the Christian Inquisition and Islamic war mongering, enslavements, and terrorism.

- Thereby, religion has frequently been used to manipulate the masses to engage in violence, including wars. In the case of truly great leaders, however (such as Gandhi and King), religion can be used to manipulate the masses to stimulate social change, not "nonviolently", but at least without physical violence. That is, as I've mentioned before, "violence" comes in many different forms: not only physical violence (from a slap on the hand to murder) but also various types and amounts of emotional, economic, and social violence.

My view, consequently, is that, in general, it's difficult to defend the promotion of any religion as the basis for governing any group – except for those leaders (such as Hammurabi, Ezra, Constantine, a cabal of popes, Muhammad, a cabal of caliphs, Joseph Smith, Hitler, Bin Laden, and current leaders of Saudi Arabia, Iran, Pakistan, etc.) who seek to be dictators.

Beyond problems in group-governance caused by religious groups, major problems have been and still are caused by corporations, or what Adam Smith in his book *The Wealth of Nations* describes as "merchants and master manufacturers." Please consider his following analysis, since much of it is as appropriate today as it was in 1776 when he wrote it.[3]

> The whole annual produce of the land and labor of every country, or what comes to the same thing, the whole price of that annual produce, naturally divides itself, it has already been observed, into three parts; the rent of land, the wages of labor, and the profits of stock; and constitutes a revenue to three different orders of people; to those who live by rent, to those who live by wages, and to those who live by profit. These are the three great, original, and constituent orders of every civilized society, from whose revenue that of every other order is ultimately derived.

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[3] From http://www.adamsmith.org/smith/won-b1-c11-conclusion-of-the-chapter.htm.

The interest of the first of those three great orders [the rent of land]… is strictly and inseparably connected with the general interest of the society. Whatever either promotes or obstructs the one, necessarily promotes or obstructs the other. When the public deliberates concerning any regulation of commerce or police, the proprietors of land never can mislead it, with a view to promote the interest of their own particular order; at least, if they have any tolerable knowledge of that interest. They are, indeed, too often defective in this tolerable knowledge. They are the only one of the three orders whose revenue costs them neither labor nor care, but comes to them, as it were, of its own accord, and independent of any plan or project of their own. That indolence, which is the natural effect of the ease and security of their situation, renders them too often, not only ignorant, but incapable of that application of mind which is necessary in order to foresee and understand the consequences of any public regulation. [By the way, Dear: in the US, the nearest that we have to "those who live by rent" is probably "the old money" that's amazingly (and sadly) common in, e.g., much of the Northeast.]

The interest of the second order, that of those who live by wages, is as strictly connected with the interest of the society as that of the first. The wages of the laborer, it has already been shown, are never so high as when the demand for labor is continually rising, or when the quantity employed is every year increasing considerably. When this real wealth of the society becomes stationary, his wages are soon reduced to what is barely enough to enable him to bring up a family, or to continue the race of laborers. When the society declines, they fall even below this. The order of proprietors may, perhaps, gain more by the prosperity of the society than that of laborers: but there is no order that suffers so cruelly from its decline. But though the interest of the laborer is strictly connected with that of the society, he is incapable either of comprehending that interest or of understanding its connection with his own. His condition leaves him no time to receive the necessary information, and his education and habits are commonly such as to render him unfit to judge even though he was fully informed. In the public deliberations, therefore, his voice is little heard and less regarded, except upon some particular occasions, when his clamor is animated, set on and supported by his employers, not for his, but their own particular purposes. [Notice, Dear, that this was before progress *via* unionization and before so many people became "professionals", e.g., architects, bankers, chemists, doctors…]

His employers constitute the third order, that of those who live by profit. It is the stock that is employed for the sake of profit which puts into motion the greater part of the useful labor of every society. The plans and projects of the employers of stock regulate and direct all the most important operations of labor, and profit is the end proposed by all those plans and projects. But the rate of profit does not, like rent and wages, rise with the prosperity and fall with the declension of the society. On the contrary, it is naturally low in rich and high in poor countries, and it is always highest in the countries which are going fastest to ruin. The interest of this third order, therefore, has not the same connection with the general interest of the society as that of the other two.

> Merchants and master manufacturers are, in this order, the two classes of people who commonly employ the largest capitals, and who by their wealth draw to themselves the greatest share of the public consideration. As during their whole lives they are engaged in plans and projects, they have frequently more acuteness of understanding than the greater part of country gentlemen. As their thoughts, however, are commonly exercised rather about the interest of their own particular branch of business, than about that of the society, their judgment, even when given with the greatest candor (which it has not been upon every occasion) is much more to be depended upon with regard to the former of those two objects than with regard to the latter. Their superiority over the country gentleman is not so much in their knowledge of the public interest, as in their having a better knowledge of their own interest than he has of his. It is by this superior knowledge of their own interest that they have frequently imposed upon his generosity, and persuaded him to give up both his own interest and that of the public, from a very simple but honest conviction that their interest, and not his, was the interest of the public. The interest of the dealers, however, in any particular branch of trade or manufactures, is always in some respects different from, and even opposite to, that of the public.

> To widen the market and to narrow the competition, is always the interest of the dealers. To widen the market may frequently be agreeable enough to the interest of the public; but to narrow the competition must always be against it, and can serve only to enable the dealers, by raising their profits above what they naturally would be, to levy, for their own benefit, an absurd tax upon the rest of their fellow-citizens. The proposal of any new law or regulation of commerce which comes from this order ought always to be listened to with great precaution, and ought never to be adopted till after having been long and carefully examined, not only with the most scrupulous, but with the most suspicious attention. It comes from an order of men whose interest is never exactly the same with that of the public, who have generally an interest to deceive and even to oppress the public, and who accordingly have, upon many occasions, both deceived and oppressed it.

In more modern terms, the author of what's generally considered to be "the bible" of capitalism wrote: "Beware the capitalists!" Out of necessity, their prime goal is their company's survival, and they'll do what they consider necessary (including manipulating markets and governments) to promote their own interests. As Italy, Germany, and Japan learned during the 20th Century, failure to control the capitalists can lead to fascism, i.e., collusion not between clerics and the rulers but between industrialists and the rulers. And as I mentioned in earlier **X**-chapters and I'll return to later in the final **X**-chapters, during the 21st Century, it will be imperative to further constrain capitalism. Otherwise, there's a dangerously high probability of depletion of essential resources, extreme economic dislocations, mass starvations even in "advanced countries", and ecological collapse.

In view of the potentials (and realizations) of governments being controlled by either clerics or industrialists and of the need to further constrain capitalism, a fundamental question about any governance scheme is: Who controls the controllers? or Who watches the watchers? or Who guards the guardians? or *"Quis custodiet ipsos custodes?"* And of course the only satisfactory answer to that fundamental question is Jefferson's, which, in brief, is: the people. As he wrote in an 1820 letter to William Jarvis:

> I know no safe depository of the ultimate powers of the society but the people themselves; and if we think them not enlightened enough to exercise their control with a wholesome discretion, the remedy is not to take it from them, but to inform their discretion.

Yet, additional observations seem appropriate, including the following:

- Regardless of the form on any government (aristocracy, democracy, monarchy, plutocracy, technocracy, theocracy…), the commonality (recognized by the Greek verb *cratein*, meaning "to rule") is that the government has essentially a monopoly on physical violence (*via* its police and other armed forces). The huge advantage of a democracy is: those in control of the monopoly on physical violence are, in turn, chosen by the people – and more importantly, the people can relatively easily depose them *via* elections.

- As I emphasized in an earlier **X**-chapter, any such governance scheme carries an inherent nemesis that suppression of violence by law enforcement relies on threats of violence by law enforcers. Yet, equally obvious is that threats of violence can actually suppress violence: an extreme example was the Mutual Assured Destruction (MAD) that dominated the standoff between the US and the USSR during most of my lifetime. Therefore, laws to suppress violence (albeit enforced by threats of violence) can result in progress toward the goal of suppressing violence – especially if the laws are defined by legislators chosen by and responsible to the people and enforced by a judicial system whose independence from legislative manipulation is supported by the people. A fatal flaw in such a scheme, however, is that (as I've outlined in earlier chapters) direct rule by the people (i.e., a "pure" democracy) invites "tyranny of the majority", i.e., "mob rule". Thus, the experiment in unfettered democracy in Ancient Athens demonstrated that such a democracy is a disastrous form of government.[4]

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[4] A recent example is the "Economic Stimulus Plan" signed into law on 2008/02/10 by President Bush. The malaise is well summarized by the following statement, whose author is commonly stated to be Alexander Fraser Tytler (1747–1813) but is actually unknown: "A democracy is always temporary in nature; it simply cannot exist as a permanent form of government. A democracy will continue to exist up until the time that voters discover that they can vote themselves generous gifts from the public treasury. From that moment on, the majority always votes for the candidates who promise the most benefits from the public treasury, with the result that every democracy will finally collapse due to loose fiscal policy, which is always followed by a dictatorship."

- It seems likely that the "huge advantage of a democracy" (free elections – coupled with a free press and the difficulty of getting a lot of people to agree on anything!) is a reasonable hypothesis to explain the data (uncovered by Rummel and reviewed in an earlier **X**-chapter) that show democracies have not engaged in wars against other democracies during the past ~200 years. This hypothesis permits the prediction that if more countries become democratic, wars will become less likely.

- There is, however, the huge problem that a substantial (but unknown) percentage of Muslims and even a substantial percentage of Americans (somewhere in the range between 10–30%) want to live, not in democracies, but in theocracies (of course with those espousing such views desiring to obtain a monopoly on physical violence, requiring others to adopt their crazy worldviews or suffer the consequences). Strife (e.g., reaction to Islamic terrorism) is then inevitable

Furthermore, even supposing that the "religious rabble" could be convinced that democracy would be a better form of government than theocracy (or other form of dictatorship), substantial questions about (and problems with) democracies are readily apparent. Below, I want to show you some examples that illustrate that "somethin' is seriously wrong" with existing democracies – while simultaneously maintaining that, even at their worst, democracies are much better than theocracies and other types of autocratic or totalitarian governments.

At the outset, however, let me warn you (once again) that I'm way out of my field of expertise – if I still have one! Consequently, Dear, if you want to seriously investigate such topic as those below, I'd recommend that you do it on your own, e.g., by first getting your Ph.D. in political science – which, by the way, is quite a stretch of the word "science", since I doubt if a single *controlled* experiment has ever been performed in politics! At the outset, also, maybe I should address your possible concern that my plan seems "sacrilegious" (viz., "treating something others consider worthy of respect or reverence with disrespect or irreverence"). That is, maybe you think that democracy isn't something to be experimented with; in contrast, I think that the need for continued exploration to find better ways to govern groups is abundantly clear – as I'll try to show you.

Even what's meant by 'democracy' is unclear! Of course it's correct that 'democracy' literally means "the people rule", but the trouble with such a definition is that it defines neither <u>how</u> the people rule nor <u>which people</u> are qualified to participate. If such questions are addressed, more questions arise, e.g.,

- Are "the people" to rule *via* an assembly of all landowners and then "majority rule"? That was the method used in Ancient Athens. Subsequently, the method (not restricted just to land owners) seemed infeasible for larger regions – but it could be feasible now (even in large countries and even worldwide) courtesy the internet.

- Or, as suggested by George S. Sagi in his 1998 book *A Theory of Direct Democracy* (which you can find on the internet), what if, for each topic on which a "community decision" is needed, a group of a few citizens were chosen (essentially by lottery, similar to the method used to pass judgment on fellows citizens in law courts) to consider, evaluate, and promulgate a specific law?

- Or as still another option, are the people to rule by electing representatives to promulgate laws? Of course this is the method currently used in most (representative) democracies, but there can be (and are) many variations.

As for variations in representative democracies, consider some methods by which representatives can be chosen: 1) One person, one vote; 2) One person, one vote, but each person's ballot weighted by taxes paid during the previous year; 3) One person, one vote for representatives in one group of legislators (e.g., our House of Representatives), but for another group of legislators (e.g., Senators), weight each person's ballot according to taxes paid; 4) Elect representatives by majority votes (e.g., as in the US); or 5) Have each voter chose a political party and then let each party assign the number of representatives to the legislative body in proportion to the party's share of the total vote.[5]

Moreover, in any "democracy", there are many possible variations on how the people or their representatives could rule, for example:

- Eligible voters could rule directly as in Ancient Athens, e.g., now, with people using the internet (or similar) to cast their votes on every issue,

- Eligible voters could rule by electing representatives who are without "party affiliation" and who would then act as independent agents in the various branches of

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[5] For example, if Liberals obtained 40% of the popular vote, Conservatives 30%, Libertarians 20%, and a "Green Party" 10%, then rather than the winner-take-all method (as in the US presidential vote) and rather than a catch-as-catch-can method (as in Britain, where membership in the House of Commons is determined by each candidate winning a specific district), have the political party assign seats in proportion to the popular vote (i.e., in the case mentioned, 40% would be Liberals, 30% Conservatives, 20% Libertarians, and 10% "Greens"). And of course, such a splintered Congress would have more difficulty promulgating laws, but then 1) there are advantages to that (!) and 2) the Congress would more faithfully represent the opinions of the people.

government (e.g., we could elect the Head of the Defense Department, the Speaker of the House, members of the Supreme Court, etc.),

•   Eligible voters could rule as in the US and the UK by electing representatives affiliated with specific political parties, but who then could rule in any of many different ways (e.g., in a parliamentary system, which elects its leader, or in a system such as in the US, in which the people elect the leader).

And still another point that I would make if you were worried about my proposal (to "sacrilegiously" experiment with democracy) is the following. First, realize that people have been "experimenting with democracy" for at least the past 2500 years. Next, consider some of the huge number of experiments that "should" yet be performed, seeking answers to such questions as the following.

•   What criteria should be set to define "eligible" voters? That is, in the term "the people rule", exactly what's meant by "the people"? All people? All people over 18? All property owners? All people with at least a high-school education? All people who have demonstrated at least minimal competence in "critical thinking"? All people including those in mental institutions? In prisons?

•   In the term "the people rule", what exactly is meant by "rule"? Is the majority "permitted" to violate rights of minorities? What rights? Rights defined by some "Constitution"? Then does that mean that some Constitution (rather than the people) actually rules, e.g., defining what's "permitted"?

•   If rule is actually *via* a Constitution, then who defines the Constitution and how is it to be changed? If it can be changed by a majority of "eligible voters", then does that mean that the majority actually rules (and can eliminate the rights of selected minorities)? Does it mean that the "eligible voters" get to define who's an "eligible voter"? And if it's essentially impossible to change the Constitution (e.g., by requiring an overwhelming majority to change it), then does that mean that the framers of the Constitution actually rule? If the framers are long since dead, then is this an example of the notorious hand of the dead on the throat of the living?

•   And if, at the base of it all, the people rule by popular or public opinion, who in fact controls over dominant means of influencing public opinion? A few conglomerates that own mass-media outlets? Do those who control a state's propaganda apparatus actually rule? What about the notorious statement by a Public Relations (PR) person: I can fool all of the people all of the time – if I have a big enough advertising budget.

•   And thus, is the group that actually rules in a democracy the group that has the most money, the most competent PR people, the most access to the mass media, the ability to convince the most dupes to follow, the most weapons, or…?

Thereby, Dear, I hope you begin to see that by looking into "experimenting with democracy", my goal isn't to treat democracy sacrilegiously; instead, my goals are to try to understand what 'democracy' really means and then try to identify ways that it might be 'improved' – assuming that agreement can be reached on what is meant by both 'improved' and 'democracy'!

As you know, the founders of the American system of government were worried about "the tyranny of the majority" (as can occur in any "pure democracy" and did occur in Ancient Athens); therefore, they introduced major new features into our governance scheme, leading it to be correctly called a 'republic' rather a 'democracy':

•   One modification (which I think is of least importance – although, of course, of huge importance!) was the establishment of the Bill of Rights, which contains protections of minorities from oppression by the majority. And I call it "of least importance", because actually, any of our "Rights" can theoretically be withdrawn by the majority *via* a Constitutional Amendment.

•   A second and more important way in which our government is not a democracy is because of our Senate: its members are not elected according to the principle "one person one vote" (which, by the way, is what James Madison sought). Instead, members are elected by the "undemocratic" process of two senators per state, regardless of the population (or wealth or any other measure) of the state. And why I consider the Senate to be so important is because it's then a bulwark against the tyranny of the majority!

•   And a third bulwark against the tyranny of the majority is the undemocratic way – and the only way – by which our Constitution can be amended. It can't be modified even if 90% of the people want it amended; only if three quarters of the states approve the modification. Further and in fact, the method of representation in the Senate is the only aspect of our Constitution that can't be amended, even if all states desired such an amendment (and of course it's highly doubtful that the smaller states would ever desire such a change). That is, the only way to constitutionally scrap the "undemocratic" representation in the Senate is to trash our entire Constitution!

Meanwhile, though, there's no doubt that the way the Senate is constituted causes substantial problems. I've commented on some of these problems in earlier chapters and will suggest some solutions later in this chapter and the next. Basically, the problem is that the method of undemocratic representation invites (and causes) the robbing of the larger states by the smaller states. But otherwise, the undemocratic Senate and the undemocratic method of amending the Constitution are bulwarks for the protection of rights of minorities from the tyranny of the majority!

3. General Features of Solutions to Problems of Group Governance

Before trying to discern possible ways to "improve" any government, surely a reasonable first step is to try to get agreement on concepts, definitions, and objectives. To start, I'll assume you agree that the noun 'government' means a method by which decisions for any group are made and enforced. That's consistent with the Greek origin of the verb 'govern' (viz., *kubernan*, meaning "to steer"). Further, I'll assume you agree with the Greek philosopher Heraclitus (c.540 – c.480 BCE) that "all things come to pass through… strife." Certainly an enormous quantity data supports that assessment. If you agree with both of those concepts, then I trust you agree with the concepts that 1) the objective of any government is to manage the inevitable strife in any group and 2) the objective of any type of democratic or representative government is to manage strife in a way that's "most beneficial to the people" (however that phrase might be defined).

It's difficult to achieve those objectives, because the strife with which any government must contend is derived from so many conflicting desires of the people. For example, first for individuals:

* People want both "freedom <u>to</u>" (viz., 'liberty', i.e., freedom to do what they desire) and "freedom <u>from</u>" (viz., 'security', e.g., freedom from consequences of the liberties of others!),

* People want the benefits of both cooperation (e.g., in the production of goods and services) and competition (much of which is derived from individualism, e.g., in the pricing of goods and services),

* People want producers to make profits but not at the expense of consumers (which is the only way profits can be made!),

* People want to pollute (in the sense of wanting to maximize production at minimum obvious expense) but not to be exposed to pollution,

* People want maximum rights (especially for themselves) but with minimum responsibilities, and

* People want "peace" and "prosperity" and "justice" – provided that they get to define what those terms mean!

In short, people want to have their cake and to eat it, too!

Besides such strife, with which all governments must contend, is the strife between and among groups (especially religious and political groups) caused by conflicts generated by "special-interests" (including the interests of labor unions, professional groups, environmentalists, and especially, private and public corporations). That is, in addition to the above listing (which emphasized strife in relationships among individuals and with their government), individuals form into sundry groups (or factions), and a critical feature of any government is how it responds to strife derived from pressures from such factions.

In this country, for example, people form into a host of religious groups, civic groups (e.g., environmentalists, teachers, veterans, retirees, etc.), and especially, various economic groups (e.g., employed by the same large company such as GE, GM, IBM, etc., by similar companies such as airlines, coal miners, automakers, etc., or even just the same type of companies, such as agro-businesses, small businesses, professions, etc.). In total, the resulting strife that must be managed by any government is enough for most people to choose not to enter politics and seek safer professions (such as being an astronaut) or less challenging professions (such as brain surgery)!

Certainly the questions and challenges of governance and ways to improve governance are daunting. Some that are obvious include the following.

• Given that representatives in any republican government must seek re-election, how can "the system" ensure that representatives won't act in ways primarily to improve their chances of re-election? [And let me add my answer to that question: it can't! Thus, I see no general solution to such inadequacies of our form of government without making re-election illegal – but the alternatives of either one-term (e.g., for 10 years) or life-term appointments have obvious problems. A partial solution may be available by weakening the two-party system that dominates in the US. Thus, the more politicians (such as Senators Lieberman and McCain) who can survive essentially independent from the two-party system, then the weaker the two-party system will become – and the weaker will become the influence of enormous sums of money spent by "special interests" in securing "party favors".]

• Given that the Constitution of any government establishes a framework for the pursuit of goals, then whose goals and what goals are promoted by the Constitution? [And let me also mention at least a partial answer to that question: the primary goals served by our Constitution are those of independent, self-serving capitalists; in contrast, throughout history, the primary reason why most societies were formed was because people concluded that cooperative action would benefit individuals more than independent action; consequently, our Constitution inadequately accounts for historical wisdom, inadequately promoting cooperation.]

- Given that, to survive, corporations must seek all possible advantages, how can "we the people" appropriately constrain capitalism? [I'll address this question in some depth in the final **X**-chapters; here, I'll just mention that the challenge for humanity is to walk a not-too-tight tightrope into the future, keeping balance, succumbing neither to the left nor the right: neither corporate control of society (fascism) nor societal control of corporations (communism). Simultaneously, "we the people" must teach corporations that, to survive in society, their wisest move is to practice good "cooperate citizenship".]

And then there is the even more fundamental question: How can "we the people" form a better type of government?

To find specific examples of inadequacies in representative democracies, one need look no farther than the US, where the vast majority of representatives have demonstrated (at least to me) that their primary goal is not to serve the people but to be re-elected. Except for rare politicians (and I can't think of a single one right now!), pork-barrel politics and political-action-committee (PAC) money reign supreme, especially (in the case of national politicians) the money associated with "the military-industrial complex". To counteract such excesses, essentially every year, every President pleads for a "line-item veto" to try to eliminate the pork, and every year, the Congress basically laughs at the President. Every year, there are pleas to constrain the PACs and the military-industrial complex, and every year, members of Congress demonstrate that they want, far more, to keep the money flowing – ostensibly for their constituents (but more likely, so the politicians will be re-elected).

In the case of the US, an obvious flaw in our Constitution (a flaw that may yet prove to be fatal, e.g., with the collapse of the military-industrial complex) is its failure to address the fundamental schism in any society: those who want "the government" to give them more "goodies" and those who are taxed to pay for such goodies. In principle, to correct that flaw seems simple enough: continue to have members of the House represent similar numbers of people, but elect members of the Senate to represent taxes paid. Alternatively, continue to have two Senators from each State, but weight their votes proportionally with the net Federal taxes paid by their States – and in cases such as Alaska for which the net Federal tax is negative (i.e., Alaskans receives more Federal funds than it pays in Federal taxes), then weight their Senators votes with the value zero (i.e., their votes would no longer be counted).

In practice, however, a corresponding Constitutional Amendment would have essentially zero chance of passing, since its highly doubtful that it would pass in the Senate and almost certainly it wouldn't pass in the States destined to lose power and revenue. That is, as is common throughout the world, the prime impediment to improving any governance schemes is the unwillingness of those in power to lose any of their power, i.e., they'll seek to maintain the *status quo*. Which then reminds me, again, of the wisdom in the remark by UN Secretary General Kofi Anan, made during his speech accepting the 2001 Nobel Peace Prize (awarded to him and to the UN):

> The obstacles to democracy have little to do with culture or religion, and much more to do with the desire of those in power to maintain their position at any cost. This is neither a new phenomenon nor one confined to any particular part of the world.

By the way, given the evidence that I showed you in an earlier **X**-chapter about religious extremists seeking to establish theocracies (both Islamists in Muslim countries and "Christianists" in our own), you might question Anan's claim that "the obstacles to democracy have little to do with culture or religion", but then, recall the perceptive remark by Salman Rushdie (who is still under a death threat from Islamists for allegedly "insulting Islam"): "Fundamentalism isn't about religion; it's about power."

Support for Rushdie's assessment is available even in the US. One example that I addressed in an earlier **X**-chapter could be stated as a question: how is it that ignoramuses manage to control education policies (e.g., in Kansas)? The answer to that question is that most people expect things to progress reasonably, but ideologues can gain control (because their ideologies consume them). In fact, successes of theists in their attempts to maintain the *status quo* have almost always surpassed the desires of the majority of the people of any society.

That strange result seems primarily a result of the single-minded purpose and even vehemence with which theists pursue their objectives. As Susan Jacoby said:

> Most people who are freethinkers or secularists or liberal religious thinkers don't spend their whole day thinking about God and how every decision in government accords with their religion. But fundamentalists do. That makes them much better organized, much better disciplined and goal-oriented in both a specific and a general way than more secular people tend to be. And I think that has to change.

An undesirable social consequence of a dedicated vocal minority being given the opportunity to speak is: their loud and sustained rhetoric commonly receives a disproportionate hearing in the community (e.g., the "Religious Reich" gaining control of many school boards throughout this country). In theory, the best way to change the situation is for free thinkers to speak up and to participate in politics, but in practice, unfortunately, such involvement normally only occurs when theists "go too far" (e.g., by attempting to have "intelligent design" taught as science, by outlawing abortion, or by crashing passenger planes into buildings).

Besides the difficulty in overcoming social inertia, though, there are more general – and highly appropriate – concerns about "experimenting" with any social system in an attempt to develop new cooperatives. After all, all societies (from Ancient Egypt and India to nations in the 20th Century that adopted fascism and communism) have been experiments in new types of cooperatives, and many (if not most) have been colossal failures, causing an enormous number of people an enormous amount of harm. History does suggest, however, that some such experiments were relatively successful, e.g., the Persian Empire under Cyrus the Great (580–520 BCE), the "Golden Age" of Ancient Greece (from about 500 to 300 BCE), the Song Dynasty in China (960–1279 CE), European nations during their Renaissance, and so on, including many modern nations in the West. Common characteristics of successes seem to have been emphases on education and on human rights. Yet, history also shows that, more often than not, failures have occurred, commonly because those members of the society who attained privileged positions (e.g., clerics, politicians, and members of the military) understandably resisted additional change.

As for how to "improve" governments, I don't want to describe my suggestions again, but to remind you of some topics I've mentioned in earlier chapters, reconsider the following (simple!) ideas:

• Require people to demonstrate competence in critical thinking before they gain the privilege of voting,

• Elect two legislative groups in every government, with votes on any bill by every member of the first group weighted in proportion to the number of (eligible) voters represented (as in our current Federal House of Representatives) and with the votes on any bill by every member of the second group weighted in proportion to the amount of tax revenue received from the voters represented, and

- Prohibit the private practice of law, have all lawyers be civil servants, have the courts assign lawyers for all cases *via* a process of random selection from the pool of appropriately trained lawyers, merge the roles of police and state prosecutors into a single, expanded police activity, and from that expanded activity, remove the role of prosecuting attorney (giving that role, instead, to a court appointed, randomly selected attorney or group of attorneys).

Unfortunately, however (at least, in my opinion it's unfortunate!), the chances of peacefully implementing such suggestions are essentially zero, since once again, there's too much vested interest in maintaining the *status quo* – especially from religious kooks.

One exception that may be worth exploring is the possibility that sufficient support might be found and generated in this country to pass a Constitutional Amendment requiring new voters to have at least their high-school diploma before being permitted to vote. Current voters might conclude not only that such an Amendment would help meet Jefferson's desire that the electorate be informed but also would be a way to stimulate kids to obtain at least a high-school education.

Alternatively, perhaps such an idea might be incorporated in new Constitutions of new political unions, such as the European Union – although such ideas should be first experimentally tested at smaller spatial scales. I'll comment more upon such possibilities in the next two chapters; in the remainder of this chapter I want to comment on some ongoing experiments.

4. Experiments in Group Governance
From the above ramblings, I trust, Dear, that you're beginning to see some of the many complications and inadequacies in the concept of "democracy" and some of the expected difficulties if improvements are proposed. Maybe you're already thinking about how "democracies" might be improved *via* experimentation. Before such experiments are proposed, performed, and evaluated, however, a complete picture of any proposed, improved type of democracy should be sketched – but I don't have sufficient training and understanding to try to do even that. Nonetheless, in the design of such experiments, surely it would be sensible to try to incorporate what's been learned during the 200+ years since James Madison sketched his plan for his experiment, i.e., America's Constitution.

Undoubtedly, Madison should be congratulated for attempting to establish a system in which each member of the legislature would represent the same number of people (as is now the case in the House of Representatives), and surely we should mourn with him that the small states refused to accept the wisdom of his plan to have all States in the Union represented equally in the Senate. The wisdom of Madison's plan can be discerned from the huge number of instances, during the subsequent 200+ years, in which the small States have dipped their hands in the communal pork barrel, robbing the larger States (which continues today, e.g., think of Senators Ted Stevens of Alaska, Pete Domenici of New Mexico, and Robert Byrd of West Virginia).

Even in politics, however, the goddess Nemesis is apparently active – even if she seems to have slowed down substantially. Thus, although it's clear that the "princes of pork" (such as Byrd, Domenici, and Stevens) are primarily interested solely in their own re-election (to which end, they've apparently concluded, they must "bring home the bacon" – putting it on the tab of the larger, wealthier States, especially California, New York, and Texas), yet in time, even the larger states can prosper from the pork stolen by senators from the smaller states. Thus, a common rapid response to "pork-barrel politics" is for the unemployed, under-employed, and "grub-stake grabbers" to drift from the larger states to states where there's "pork-a-plenty" (e.g., they drift from California to Alaska, from New York to W. Virginia, and form Texas to New Mexico). In time, the result is a shift in the population of less productive people from the larger states to the smaller states, decreasing burdens on the larger states and increasing burdens on smaller states – and in time, surely the goddess Nemesis smiles.

But that subtlety aside, the task of designing (and then experimentally testing) a better democratic system is, at least for me, too daunting to tackle. I'd even suggest that it was a task too difficult even for the founders of this country! Thus, Madison theorized that, in the new Union, geographical distributions of different "factions" would ensure that no one faction would dominate during subsequent strife, but though that may be true for some factions, data suggest that some factions (e.g., Christian and Muslim crazies) are distributed with such geographic (even, worldwide) uniformity that his theory is undermined. The founders also proposed some wise "checks and balances" within the new government, but based on the subsequent 200+ years of experience, it seems clear that insufficient "check and balances" were incorporated.

Now, Dear, if you're thinking something similar to, "It's hopeless: democracy is a disaster, and there's no democratic way to fix it!", then I'd point out not only Winston Churchill's remark "It has been said that democracy is the worst form of government…" but also add what he added "…except all the others that have been tried." I'd also add what he didn't: in the long run, democracy is the only form of government. It may take generations for some totalitarian form of government to be overthrown, it may even take centuries, but history shows that, eventually, the people will have their way. Therefore, the question that begs being addressed is: What experiments should be (or are being) conducted to try to make transitions to better forms of government proceed more smoothly?

Fortunately for humanity, that question is already being addressed. At present, there are literally billions of new experimental cooperatives being tested – at scales as small as including only a few people for only a few weeks out to involving essentially everyone for as long as can be perceived. Unfortunately for humanity, however, few of these experiments are being evaluated in an attempt to determine not only their consequences but also, as appropriate, to design and test better experiments.

That is, although a huge number of new cooperatives are being tested (from local to global scales, as I'll illustrate below), yet, essentially no one is objectively collecting the data from the experiments, trying to make sense of them, proposing hypotheses, and so on. That is, the scientific method isn't being applied. Surely to sanity we should smarten up! Essentially every faculty member in every political and social science department in every university in the world should be funded by the public to try to make sense of such experiments and then, to report their results to the public. How else are we going to learn?!

For the development of new experimental cooperatives, I think that the key is an old one, which I introduced near the start of this book (and never will defend adequately!), namely: "If in doubt, let the system go free." In the case of searching for better governance systems, that means: "Go for it – let experience find better systems!" Nonetheless, there's an obvious additional step that sensible humans should take, namely: "For cryin' out loud, evaluate the experimental results!" To stimulate you to see what I mean, consider the following examples.

Domestic Partners

Compared with when I was your age, Dear, a huge number of unmarried couples are living together in what my generation was brainwashed to describe as "without the benefit of clergy". Good for them! It was one more fake "benefit" of clerics!

Some illustrative data are the following.[6] In the US in 1960, the Census Bureau reported 439,000 such "cohabiting" couples; in 2005 there were 4.85 million – an increase of more than 1,000%! In the US in 2002, 8.2% of couples were cohabiting; in France in 1999, the figure was 17.5%; in Scandinavian countries, roughly 50% of all children are born into families of unmarried couples. In contrast, in Israel the cohabitation rate is less than 3% of all couples, and in Islamic countries (controlled by the clerics) cohabitation is illegal. Even in Islamic countries, however, some enterprising couples have found ways to circumvent clerical control of their sexual lives: they enter into "temporary marriages" – in some cases, as "temporary" as an hour; that is, such "temporary marriages" are used to circumvent laws prohibiting prostitution.

But theists (especially fundamentalist clerics and their dupes, e.g., the "Religious Reich" in the US, including the Mormons, and their political allies in the Republican Party) are not letting their power slip away without a fight, even if they don't have facts to support them. One of many examples of political skullduggery in the US is revealed in the following quotation:[7]

> Why did the Bush Administration and the Republican-dominated Congress dedicate three quarters of a billion dollars to unproven marriage programs while cutting other welfare initiatives? The *Wall Street Journal* notes that Mr. Horn [Assistant Secretary for Children and Families at the US Department of Health and Human Services (HHS)] "pushed to include funding for marriage promotion", despite some reluctance from his boss, HHS Secretary Tommy Thompson. "It wasn't my first priority," Mr. Thompson acknowledges, but says he came to see the political advantages. "The religious right certainly found this a plus and we could find more supporters for the legislation."

Such funding of still another "faith-based initiative" – with money derived from taxes also on atheists! – has no scientific basis.

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[6] Data from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cohabitation, where data from more countries can be found.

[7] From the "Alternatives to Marriage Project", specifically, http://www.unmarried.org/rings2.pdf.

Thus, as you can see from the graph on p.17 of the source of the above quotation, data from ~20 Western nations don't support the Bush Administration's claim of a correlation between out-of-wedlock births and child poverty. In sum, then, now that the Religious Reich can no longer imprison people for testing the new experimental cooperative commonly called "domestic partners", they've managed to rob the public treasury to pay poor people for being married while simultaneously punishing those children whose parents aren't married (by withholding poverty funds). It seems that the Christian Reich is hell bent on putting into practice the Biblical idiocy about "punishing the children for the sins of the fathers"!

Cooperatives within Cooperatives
Each of us is involved in cooperatives contained within other cooperatives, contained within other cooperatives, and so on – like the set of Russian dolls that you played with when you were a toddler and dubbed: "Outrageous!" The set of cooperatives, each with its own "governance scheme", is different for different people.

In your case, for example, you're involved with: your democratically behaving friends (☺), your authoritarian rule over your younger siblings (☺), your parents' dictatorial rule (☹), as well as (for you) the dictatorial rule of your Church and school, the sometimes responsive rule of your school board, city, and county, and the rather remote rules of your State, your Nation, the Geneva Convention, the World Trade Organization (WTO), the UN's Declaration of Human Rights, and so on. For adults it's similar: they might rule in their own homes (at least, some grandmothers do!) and maybe they have some authority in some of their clubs (including Churches) and professional organizations with which they're affiliated, but also, they can be ruled by other clubs, professional organizations, their employers, political parties, and various levels of governments.

Each group has some governance scheme to help it pursue the group's goals. And given the ubiquity of governance schemes, perhaps you see, Dear, what seems to be an undue emphasis on governance at the national scale. For you, for example, which is more important: that you've been "grounded" for a week by your dictatorial parents, that your peers didn't invite you to the party, that the college of your choice wants you to take still more exams, that your insurance company (another collective) plans to increase your car insurance, or who is elected to be President of the country?

For other Americans, however, governance at the national scale is obviously very important, for example, those in the military, those who have national-scale businesses, and someone such as your father, who both pays substantial Federal taxes and relies on Federal funding for his and his students' research. Furthermore, our national government sets a huge number of rules and standards that most of us now take for granted, in everything from lead in paint to materials used in aircraft and from drugs to banking.

In addition, notice that many of us feel that national governance is relatively important in large measure because our society is relatively free. For contrast, imagine how horrible it is in theocratic and other dictatorial societies. In Saudi Arabia, for example, almost every move that a young woman such as you makes is monitored and constrained by the national government, especially by the ubiquitous members of the religious police (employed by "The Committee for the Propagation of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice").

In such "conservative" societies – which most of us in the "liberal" West call "backward" – dictatorial rule "is the rule" in essentially every group with which every individual is affiliated: family, tribe, religion, employment, and governments at larger scales. And amazingly to me, many people in the West (including Christian fundamentalists, most Mormons, and Muslims who have immigrated) seek similar structures in the West, they say for "the preservation of family values" (similar to "The Committee for the Propagation of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice"!), but I suspect their leaders want more power and their followers have either never experienced freedom or were frightened by it.

In any event, several conclusions seem obvious:

1) In every society, there's an enormous number of groups, each with its own governance scheme,

2) In each society, every individual is usually affiliated with many such groups with varying commitments to each group's goals,

3) The freedom to choose the groups to which one is affiliated is absolutely essential in a "liberal" society (for "liberated" people),

4) Control over groups, group affiliations, and group governance is the hallmark of repressive regimes and fundamentalist religions, and

5) The resulting strife within and potentially among societies – in essence between liberals and conservatives – can be, is, and no doubt will continue to be enormous.

For example, Dear, if you decide to join a homosexual bowling club, then although in this country you could expect to receive some "flak" from your mother, your other grandparents, and other members of the Mormon Church, if you tried to do the same while living in Saudi Arabia or Iran, you could be stoned to death.

And by pursuing such an example further, perhaps you can see more clearly the need for applying the scientific method to social experiments. I and other liberated people would argue that, whereas your life belongs to you, then so long as your actions don't damage other people's equal right to claim their own existences, then do as you desire, e.g., join such a bowling club. Conservatives, on the other hand (especially religious fundamentalists whose "holy books" decree that homosexuality is "an abomination before the Lord"), would probably argue that you shouldn't be allowed to join such a bowling club, because your lifestyle would damage "the collective": you would be promoting "vice"; you would be undermining "the social good."

The viewpoints of both liberals and conservatives, however, are based on untested premisses, and the only way to determine which opinion is closer to "the truth" is to test the predictions experimentally. Therefore, as a scientific humanist, I'd say: "Go ahead and join the club, and let's monitor to see if you damage other people's equal rights to their own existence" – although I wouldn't grant those other people some "equal right" not to be offended by your private behavior! And before accepting the conservatives' opinions, I would require that they demonstrate that your behavior "undermines the social good."

Other Ongoing Experiments in Group Governance
There is a similar need – and I would even say a "desperate need" – to experimentally determine optimum methods of governing groups, especially in conservative societies (such as most Muslim societies) and at larger spatial scales, out to and including the global scale.

In the West, innumerable such experiments (in small groups and up to the national scale) have been conducted and evaluated during the past thousand

years, especially during the past few centuries, including those that resulted in the *Magna Charta* (with which English barons managed to wrestle some of the "divine right" to rule from the English king – over the strenuous objection of the pope, who must have seen that it was also a threat to his own "divine right" to rule!), those that led to the English parliament and the English Bill of Rights, and of course those that led to the establishment of the American Constitution with its Bill of Rights.

The Reformation also provided additional valuable experimental results in governance, resulting from the Protestant churches trying to establish their own governance scheme once they broke free from papal dictatorship. In fact, the cumulative result of approximately a thousand year's worth of experimentation is one of the most important books ever published in the history of the world: Robert's *Rules of Order*, which has been continuously maintained since its first publication in 1876 by General Henry M. Robert and is "the basic handbook of operation for most clubs, organizations, and other groups." Robert, an engineering officer in the regular army, wrote the book as a result of his being asked to preside over a church meeting and realizing that he didn't know how![8]

And what an astounding contrast appears between experiences in the West that led to Robert's *Rules of Order* and experiences of Muslims living in theocracies and dictatorships. In most conservative societies and essentially all Muslim societies, the essence of their governing schemes is control – particularly control over all sexual matters and (therefore) especially control over women.

And though it's weird, the result is exactly opposite from what Muslim clerics expressly forbid, namely, treating women as primarily "sex objects"! As the former Prime Minister of Pakistan Benazir Bhutto wrote shortly before she was murdered by Islamists:

> I know that I am a symbol of what the so-called Jihadists, Taliban, and al-Qaeda, most fear… I am a female political leader fighting to bring modernity, communication, education, and technology to Pakistan.

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[8] For a brief history of the book, see http://www.robertsrules.com/history.html. The full text (176 pages) of the 1915 edition (the 4th edition, now in the public domain) is at http://www.rulesonline.com/. The current (10th edition) is a whopping 802 pages!

In fact, that combination of ingredients (communication, education, and technology) is stimulating (and almost certainly will bring) major changes to governance schemes in the Muslim world. A case in point recently occurred in Saudi Arabia, which is essentially controlled by the fundamentalist (Sunni) Wahhabi sect of Islam. I encourage you to look at details of this case by yourself; here, I'll provide just a brief outline.[9]

In Saudi Arabia, from the early 1960s when TV was first introduced until recently, all television programming was strictly controlled by Wahhabi clerics. During the 1990s, satellite TV became available, enabling Saudis to watch programs originating from other Arab-language stations. For 18 months starting in December 2003, the Lebanese "reality television show" *Star Academy* became available to Saudis, and it was enormously popular: viewers called in on their cellphone and sent text messages or e-mail on the internet to vote on the performances of contestants (both male and female). The Saudi clerics issued a Fatwa deploring the show:

> …the Committee [the Permanent Committee for Scientific Research {cough, cough} and the Issuing of Fatwas] thinks that they [*the Star Academy* shows] should be banned and it is *harem* [forbidden] to watch them, finance them, take part in them, call them to vote, or to express admiration of them…

The clerics were specifically and adamantly against "the free mixing of the sexes", the "blatant promotion of immorality", etc. – not to dwell on the horror of people voting for what they wanted! And the result: the people continued to watch the program and use their new communication technology to vote their preferences. Mark down one more impressive win for modernization over barbarity: the same Wahhabi kooks that resisted the introduction of the bicycle into Saudi Arabia (calling it "the Horse of Satan"), and still into the 1960s, a special permit was needed to ride one![10]

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[9] For details, see the 2006 report "Hypermedia and governance in Saudi Arabia" by Marwan M. Kraidy and available at http://firstmonday.org/issues/special11_9/kraidy/ .

[10] Dear: As you can see from a 2008/02/15 report in the New York Times entitled "Arab Ministers Adopt Satellite TV Rules" (http://www.nytimes.com/aponline/world/AP-Egypt-Arab-Media.html), "Arab Information Ministers" have agreed upon a "Charter" that will force essentially all satellite TV stations in the region to take "a huge step backward… Qatar, whose government funds the popular station Al-Jazeera, was the only nation of the 21 Arab states not to sign the Charter…" The Charter demands "adherence to objectivity, sincerity, and respect to the dignity of the countries, nations, and their national sovereignty [translation: no more criticism of government officials and no more deviations from clerical rules]." Al-Jazeera's statement was that the Charter was a "risk to the freedom of expression in the Arab world" – as indeed it will be. So, Round 2 of the fight goes to the damnable clerics – but in the end, they'll lose.

Still another dramatic and dramatically important experiment in governance is occurring in the People's Republic of China. It's important not only to the ~1.2 billion Chinese people, but to everyone in the world. Posed as a question, the experiment is: Can the people rule (i.e., can a democracy exist) within a one-party political system? Under Mao, that one party was the Communist Party, but especially during the past two decades, communism in China has been essentially abandoned – but not the one-party system.

I won't go into any of the many complicated aspects of the Chinese experiment; to find information on the following topics, you may want to start by reading the referenced articles: theoretical possibilities for a one-party system being responsive to different factions,[11] corruption and inefficiencies within the Chinese one-party system,[12] pressures building for a revolutionary change to a multi-particle system,[13] and some aspects of China's system developing into a "technocracy", in which the most technically competent citizens ("technocrats", "professionals", or "nerds"!) rule.[14] During the next few decades, you'll learn the outcome of "the Chinese experiment"; whatever the outcome, I expect that the ramifications for the rest of the world will be significant, even "historical".

Meanwhile, in the most modern democracies during the past ~50 years, we have been conducting our own experiments in group governance at the national scale – apparently with little planning and very little evaluation, at least by the people. It's a strange experiment: in some ways it's good, in other ways it's pathetic. In essence, especially in the two-party system of the US, the goals of each party are both to gain power and then to govern by responding to polling data (which is good), but it means that elected officials are no longer "principled statesmen" (and women) but products of public relations (PR) professionals (which is bad).

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[11] See http://en.chinaelections.org/newsinfo.asp?newsid=11677 at the China Elections & Governance Website.

[12] See http://www.carnegieendowment.org/publications/index.cfm?fa=view&id=18110.

[13] For example, see http://www.slate.com/id/2117169/ and *The New York Times* article by Kristof at http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9E0CE0DE1139F93AA25753C1A964958260&sec=&spon=&pagewanted=all.

[14] For example, see the article in *Time* at http://www.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,165453,00.html.

I won't insult you by describing details of either the experiment or particular examples (Nixon, Kennedy, Reagan, Bush Sr., Mr. Clinton, Bush Jr., Mrs. Clinton, Mitt Romney, et al.), because you're familiar with most of them. But, Dear, if you should ever desire to dig deeper into the details, I expect you'll be amazed – and insulted and maybe even horrified – at the skullduggery pulled off by PR gurus. Not only do the PR-prompted candidates establish their "principled positions" based on what polling data tell them will yield most support (the "principle" of their position being: get elected!), but every possible action and statement of such PR promoted politicians is studied in "focus groups" (i.e., groups of "plain folk", whose every reaction to every proposed move of the politician is evaluated – in many cases, electronically). Subsequently, every action of the politician (holding a baby, planting a tree, wearing a sweater…) and not only what the politician says but also how it's said (emphasis on word, word order, voice tenor, pauses…) have been "choreographed" by the PR experts to yield the most likelihood of voter approval. As a result of those and other factors, data show that eligible voters (in most democratic countries) are becoming progressively less interested in choosing their governmental representatives. Illustrative is the following graph for voter turnout (as a percentage of eligible voters) in national elections in the indicated nations.[15]

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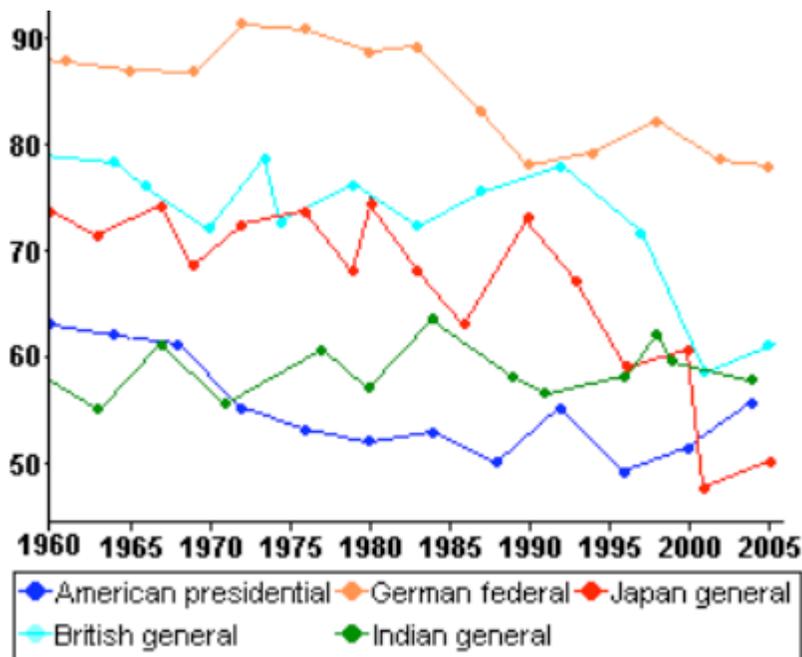
[15] Copied from Wikipedia: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Voter_turnout.

As you can find in the referenced Wikipedia article (from which the above graph was taken), many potential reasons for decreasing voter interest have been proposed, generally grouped as economic, demographic, cultural, technological, and institutional factors; data for some nations don't show the same trend (e.g., Australia and Bolivia), because voting in their national elections is mandatory. In my own cynical view and in the case of the US (and maybe the UK and Japan), I expect that the two dominant factors for low and decreasing voter turnout are the following.

1) The political parties have become so spineless and so skilled at shifting their positions to match voter preferences, there's relatively little difference between or among the parties: although different parties start from the different perspectives (e.g., liberals *vs.* conservatives), all parties extend their "principles" in the opposite direction from their "original" principles, until their research concludes that their new views are supported by a majority of the expected voters; therefore, the voters conclude that there's relatively little difference among the contending parties, the prime goal of every party is to acquire power, and there's therefore relatively little point in voting for any particular party or candidate.

2) Although there never was much point in voting with the hope that a single vote would change the outcome of any election, lately the sense of "civic duty" in voting (and the possible entertainment value in doing so!) has diminished – compared with the many other duties the people feel obliged to perform (including being employed, assisting their children, and participating in a host of other capacities, from keeping informed to maintaining their homes) as well as compared with the many other entertainment options.

Thereby and in spite of what many pundits suggest, lack of voter interest may be a sign of a healthy society: people feeling fairly pleased that (to stay in power) politicians will do pretty much what the polls advise them to do – permitting the people to get on with doing what they feel is more important and what they can best do for themselves!

In the US, as a result, an interesting experiment is being conducted: In the past, the UK and the US had strong two-party systems. China has a one party system. What seems to be occurring in the US is that we are gravitating toward a zero-party system, in that the "abiding principle" of every politician is to get elected by promising people what they tell the pollsters they want! That may seem mercenary or venal (and mercurial), but as I already suggested, maybe it's good.

One result is that some current politicians (such as Lieberman, McCain, and Schwarzenegger) seem to be trying to do their best for the majority of their constituents, regardless of party affiliations (either their own or the people's), and I for one, prefer governance by leaders who do their best to accomplish what the majority of the people desire rather than governance by politicians who are egotistically "hung up" on their own ideology (e.g., G.W. Bush). The US experiment, however, suggests that the method of "polishing a candidates appearance" has its dangers.

One danger is that the PR pros who perfect a candidate's "appearance" are also capable of manipulating public opinion (e.g., *via* "slick ads" that attack opponents). Another danger is that many people are apparently influenced more by a politician's "appearance" than the politician's capabilities, yielding an election campaign that's little more than a superficial popularity contest, in which the candidate elected has "the prettiest face", the "best body" , the most "soothing voice", or similar. And still another danger is what has occurred in the US and what I've already mentioned: as the fraction of eligible voters who participate drops, then a well-organized minority (such as the Christian Reich) can have a disproportionately large influence on the election's outcome. In turn, though, that last danger is commonly corrected in the next election, when more voters realize that a vocal minority has undue influence and therefore more voters participate.

Many other experiments are being conducted, including the "no party" governance schemes of the thousands of NonGovernmental Organizations (NGOs) and various new governance schemes such as those of the European Union and various "trading blocs", including the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), the Central American Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA), and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). But this chapter has gone on long enough (too long?); so, I'll address such "global-scale experimental cooperatives" in the final two **X**-chapters – which will be patiently waiting for you while you get some exercise.