
***The World of Tomorrow,
and the Person
of Tomorrow***

I have long had a keen interest in the future. This is a world of change, and I take pleasure in trying to discern the directions in which we are moving, or will move. I am convinced that at this point we are going through a transformational crisis, from which we and our world cannot emerge unchanged. But I like the analogy drawn from the Chinese language, in which the same character stands for two meanings: “crisis” and “opportunity.” I take the same view—that the very difficult crises of tomorrow represent equally great opportunities. I speculate about these in this chapter.

In a very real sense, I regard this paper as a fragile one. I am exposing my thinking in process, as it is at the present time. It contains ideas I have not formulated before, and infant ideas always feel shaky. It tries to draw together many vague thoughts which have been cropping up in my mind during this past year, ignited by sparks from my reading. This is particularly true of the first part of the chapter.

Then I draw on both current and past experience as I endeavor to picture the person who will be able to live in this transformed world.

I have an uneasy feeling about this chapter, a feeling I have experienced before. In some vague way I believe that what I am saying here will someday be fleshed out much more fully, either by me or by someone else. It is a beginning, an outline, a suggestion. So in all its infant awkwardness and imperfection, I present it to you. It pictures where I am now, in relation to the future.

What does the future hold? There are many people who now make it their business to try to predict our future, but all of such work is, at best, informed speculation. Scientists can predict, with almost absolute accuracy, the date and hour of arrival of Halley’s comet in 1985, but what the human world will be like on that date, no one knows. The reason can be given in a phrase: the existence of choice. Edward Cornish (1980), president of the World Future Society, puts it well:

The 1980s—more than any previous decade—will be a period in which human choice will operate more decisively than ever before. The rapid development of technology has freed man from slavery to environmental and biological circumstances. No longer is he a prisoner of a particular geographic locality, because he can travel easily to the other side of the world. He can converse with people around the globe via new electronic devices. New bio-medical advances are making it possible for him to have a longer life and better health. Improved economic systems have removed—at least in many nations—the once ever-present danger of starvation. . . . We now see the future not as a world that is forced upon us, but as a world that we ourselves create. (p. 7)

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Three Scenarios

Thinking in these terms, we can visualize various scenarios for the years ahead. At one extreme is the possibility of nuclear war. Its utter horror is forcibly brought home to me by the calm, factual words of George Bush, who has been a high government official and who is, as of this writing, a Republican candidate for president. The following interview took place between George Bush and Robert Scheer, an interviewer from the *Los Angeles Times* (Scheer, 1980):

SCHEER *Don't we reach a point with these strategic weapons where we can wipe each other out so many times and no one wants to use them or is willing to use them, that it really doesn't matter whether we're 10 percent or 2 percent lower or higher?*

BUSH *Yes, if you believe there is no such thing as a winner in a nuclear exchange, that argument makes a little sense. I don't believe that.*

SCHEER *How do you win in a nuclear exchange?*

BUSH *You have a survivability of command in control, survivability of industrial potential, protection of a percentage of your citizens, and you have a capability that inflicts more damage on the opposition than it can inflict upon you. That's the way you can have a winner, and the Soviets' planning is based on the ugly concept of a winner in a nuclear exchange.*

SCHEER *Do you mean like 5 percent would survive? Two percent?*

BUSH *More than that—if everybody fired everything he had, you'd have more than that survive.*

Let us think for a moment exactly what those words mean. In the case of nuclear war, Bush is saying, the top military personnel and government officials would survive (deep in some mountain, no doubt), and some industrial leaders and manufacturing plants would survive. But what about the rest of us? Let us say that between 2 percent and 15 percent survive. That means that, almost certainly, you and I and over 200 *million* other Americans would be killed! And Mr. Bush calls that *winning!* And he takes satisfaction in the proposition that an even greater percentage of Russians would be destroyed.

When we add to that the deadly radioactivity of almost every surviving object in both countries, and the radioactive fallout that would encircle the globe, the picture becomes even more incredible. It seems that such a scenario could be conceived only in the mind of a raving lunatic. But we know that it is held by thoughtful persons in government and the military, in the United States and the Soviet Union. And at the moment of this writing, as we threaten to use military force, if necessary, to protect our oil interests in the Middle East, it appears terrifyingly possible. So that is one almost suicidal scenario that we cannot dismiss, although its horror is such that we don't like to think about it.

If we assume that world leaders will pull back from committing planetary suicide, other scenarios become possible. One would be that things will proceed throughout the 1980s pretty much as they have until now. Terrorism and crime will persist, but so will scientific and technological breakthroughs. Some aspects of the world's problems will grow worse, but others will improve, and our lives will not greatly change.

Another scenario would see us being carried away by the newest developments in technology. Incredible advances in computer intelligence and decision-making; "test-tube" babies implanted in a woman's uterus, or perhaps grown entirely outside the human body; new species of microscopic and macroscopic life being created through recombinant work with the genes; cities under domes, with the whole environment controlled by people; completely artificial

environments permitting human beings to live in space: these are some of the new technologies that may affect our lives. They have in common the fact that each removes humankind further and further from nature, from the soil, the weather, the sun, the wind, and all natural processes. These developments would produce changes of unknown magnitude as we endeavor to manufacture decisions and lives and environments that are completely man-made. Whether we would be affected for good or ill one cannot say; the only certainty is that our separation from the natural world would be far greater than it is today.

A Basis for a Different Scenario

There is another type of scenario, based on changes having to do with the person. It is on this picture that I wish to dwell. There are many new developments today that alter our whole conception of the potentialities of the individual; that change our perceptions of “reality”; that change our ways of being and behaving; that alter our belief systems. I want simply to list, without explication, a number of these new directions, many of which will be familiar to you, while some may be strange. For a vivid and much more complete description of these and other trends, one can turn to Marilyn Ferguson’s provocative book, *The Aquarian Conspiracy* (1980), better explained by its subtitle, “Personal and Social Transformation in the 1980s.”

First, some of the developments that enlarge our view of the potentialities of the person. (The categories I am using overlap to a considerable degree, but I am sorting them for convenience in thinking.)

There is a strong and growing interest in all forms of meditation—the recognition and use of inner energy resources.

There is an increased respect for and use of intuition as a powerful tool.

Multitudes of people have experienced altered states of consciousness—many through drugs, but an increasing number through psychological disciplines. Our capacities in this direction open new worlds.

Research in biofeedback shows that our nonconscious mind can learn in a few moments, without being taught, to control the activity of a *single cell*. With a visual display of the action of some of his or her muscle groups, the ordinary person can change the action of a muscle group controlled by *one cell* in the spinal cord (Brown, 1980). The implications of this potential are mind-boggling.

Paranormal phenomena such as telepathy, precognition, and clairvoyance have been sufficiently tested that they have received scientific acceptance. Furthermore, there is evidence that most people can discover or develop such abilities in themselves.

We are learning that we can often heal or alleviate many of our diseases through the intentional use of our conscious and nonconscious minds. Holistic health is broadening our understanding of the inner capacities of the person.

There is a rapidly growing interest in the spiritual and transcendent powers of the individual.

Leading scientific students of the brain concur in the opinion that there is a potent mind, with an enormous capacity for intelligent action, which exists quite apart from the structure of the brain (Brown, 1980).

It is possible that evolution will lead us to a supraconsciousness *and* supermind of vastly more power than mind and consciousness now possess (Brown, 1980).

Now let us look at other developments that alter our perception of reality. Some of them have to do with science.

There is a convergence of theoretical physics and mysticism, especially Eastern mysticism—a

recognition that the whole universe, including ourselves, is “a cosmic dance.” In this view, matter, time, and space disappear as meaningful concepts; there exist only oscillations. This change in our conceptual world view is revolutionary.

The holographic theory of the brain’s function, developed by Stanford neuroscientist Karl Pribram (described briefly in Ferguson, 1980, pp. 177-187), not only revolutionizes our concept of the operation of the brain, but suggests that the brain may create our “reality.”

New epistemologies and philosophies of science see our current linear cause-effect concept of science as just one small example of various ways of knowing. In biological science particularly, reciprocal cause-effect relationships are now seen as the only basis for a rational science. These new ways of science will revolutionize our way of studying and perceiving the world, especially the biological and human world. (Ferguson, 1980, pp. 163-169, gives a brief but clear picture of these new approaches.)

Outside the field of science, we are also perceiving reality in new ways. This is particularly true in the realm of death and dying. We are much more acceptant of death as a reality, and we are learning a great deal about the process of dying as a culmination of living.

Other developments have to do with the ways in which change comes about in the individual. Much of the material in this book deals with such changes, but I will list them here:

The women’s movement is only one example of various kinds of consciousness-raising activities. The gay rights and black power movements are other examples. They are changing people’s behavior by calling sharp attention to the prejudices, assumptions, and stereotypes that have shaped us.

“Focusing,” or being fully aware, in the moment, of some previously denied experience, brings psychological and physiological change in psychotherapy and results in changed behavior.

There is a new realization that the person is a *process*, rather than a fixed set of habits. This evokes altered ways of behaving, increases the options.

There is a strong trend toward the greater use of individual psychotherapy, and increasing evidence that this experience brings about change in the self and in behavior.

There are multitudes of people who have experienced lasting personal and collective change in all kinds of intensive group experiences. This development has been discussed in previous chapters.

The trend toward more human attitudes in education produces profound effects in learning and in other behaviors. This too has been documented.

A final cluster of modern trends has to do with changes in our belief systems. I will note a few:

There is increased insistence on individual freedom of choice and a corresponding resistance to conformity and acceptance of authority.

There is growing opposition to, and dislike for, large institutions, corporations, bureaucracies, and much interest and effort going into small, cooperative, group efforts.

There is a growing disbelief in a reductionistic science and an increased interest in the ancient wisdom of earlier cultures, and ancient “sciences” as well.

The Significance of these Trends

What is the meaning, the significance, of all of these current developments in modern life?

Taken together, these trends profoundly transform our concept of the person and the world that he or she perceives. This person has hitherto undreamed-of potential. This person's nonconscious intelligence is vastly capable. It can control many bodily functions, can heal diseases, can create new realities. It can penetrate the future, see things at a distance, communicate thoughts directly. This person has a new awareness of his or her strength, abilities, and power, an awareness of self as a process of change. This person lives in a new universe, where all the familiar concepts have disappeared—time, space, object, matter, cause, effect—nothing remains but vibrating energy.

In my judgment, these developments constitute a “critical mass” that will produce drastic social change. In the development of the atomic bomb, temperature and other conditions were gradually heightened until a certain mass was attained. The attainment of this critical mass brought about an explosively expanding process. These developments are of that sort, except that the process will be in persons and social systems.

Another scientific analogy is the “paradigm shift.” Our scientific view of the world, at any one time, fits into a general pattern. To be sure, there are events and phenomena that do not quite fit, but they are disregarded until they begin to pile up and can no longer be ignored. Then, a Copernicus or an Einstein provides us with a whole new pattern, a new world view. It is not something patched onto the old paradigm, although it absorbs the old. It is a totally new conceptualization. One cannot move gradually from the old to the new. One must adopt one or the other: this is the paradigm shift. It has been pointed out that in science, most older scientists go to their graves believing in the previous paradigm, but the new generation grows up with, and lives comfortably with, the new paradigm.

What I am saying is that the many converging trends I have listed constitute a paradigm shift. We will try, of course, to live in our familiar world, just as people lived upon a flat world long after they knew it was round. But as these new ways of conceptualizing the person and the world sink in, becoming increasingly the basis of our thinking and our lives, transformation becomes inevitable. Ilya Prigogine (1980), the Belgian chemist who won the Nobel Prize in 1977 and who has contributed much to the new concepts of science, says, speaking for scientists: “We see a new world around us. We have the impression that we are at the dawn of a new period, with all the excitement, the hopes, and also the risks which are inherent in a new start.”

THE PERSON OF TOMORROW

Who will be able to live in this utterly strange world? I believe it will be those who are young in mind and spirit—and that often means those who are young in body as well. As our youth grow up in a world where trends and views such as I have been describing envelop them, many will become new persons—fit to live in the world of tomorrow—and they will be joined by older folk who have absorbed the transforming concepts.

Not all young people, of course. I hear that young people today are only interested in jobs and security, that they are not persons who take risks or make innovations, just conservatives looking out for “number one.” Possibly that is so, but it certainly is not true of the young people with whom I come in contact. But I am sure that some will continue to live in our present world; many, however, will dwell in this new world of tomorrow.

Where will they come from? It is my observation that they already exist. Where have I found them? I find them among corporation executives who have given up the gray-flannel rat race, the lure of high salaries and stock options, to live a simpler new life. I find them among young men

and women in blue jeans who are defying most of the values of today's culture to live in new ways. I find them among priests and nuns and ministers who have left behind the dogmas of their institutions to live in a way that has more meaning. I find them among women who are vigorously rising above the limitations that society has placed on their personhood. I find them among blacks and Chicanos and other minority members who are pushing out from generations of passivity into an assertive, positive life. I find them among those who have experienced encounter groups, who are finding a place for feelings as well as thoughts in their lives. I find them among creative school dropouts who are thrusting into higher reaches than their sterile schooling permits. I realize, too, that I saw something of this person in my years as a psychotherapist, when clients were choosing a freer, richer, more self-directed kind of life for themselves. These are a few of the places in which I have found persons who may be able to live in this transformed world.

The Qualities of the Person of Tomorrow

As I have experienced these individuals, I find they have certain traits in common. Perhaps no one person possesses all of these qualities, but I believe that ability to live in this utterly revolutionized world of tomorrow is marked by certain characteristics. I will very briefly describe some as I have seen and experienced them.

1. *Openness.* These persons have an openness to the world—both inner and outer. They are open to experience, to new ways of seeing, new ways of being, new ideas and concepts.
2. *Desire for authenticity.* I find that these persons value communication as a means of telling it the way it is. They reject the hypocrisy, deceit, and double talk of our culture. They are open, for example, about their sexual relationships, rather than leading a secretive or double life.
3. *Skepticism regarding science and technology.* They have a deep distrust of our current science and the technology that is used to conquer the world of nature and to control the world's people. On the other hand, when science—such as biofeedback—is used to enhance self-awareness and control of the person by the person, they are eager supporters.
4. *Desire for wholeness.* These persons do not like to live in a compartmentalized world—body and mind, health and illness, intellect and feeling, science and common sense, individual and group, sane and insane, work and play. They strive rather for a wholeness of life, with thought, feeling, physical energy, psychic energy, healing energy, all being integrated in experience.
5. *The wish for intimacy.* They are seeking new forms of closeness, of intimacy, of shared purpose. They are seeking new forms of communication in such a community—verbal as well as nonverbal, feelingful as well as intellectual.
6. *Process persons.* They are keenly aware that the one certainty of life is change—that they are always in process, always changing. They welcome this risk-taking way of being and are vitally alive in the way they face change.
7. *Caring.* These persons are caring, eager to be of help to others when the need is real. It is a gentle, subtle, nonmoralistic, nonjudgmental caring. They are suspicious of the professional “helpers.”
8. *Attitude toward nature.* They feel a closeness to, and a caring for, elemental nature. They are ecologically minded, and they get their pleasure from an alliance with the forces of nature, rather than in the conquest of nature.

9. *Anti-institutional.* These individuals have an antipathy for any highly structured, inflexible, bureaucratic institution. They believe that institutions should exist for people, not the reverse.

10. *The authority within.* These persons have a trust in their own experience and a profound distrust of external authority. They make their own moral judgments, even openly disobeying laws that they consider unjust.

11. *The unimportance of material things.* These individuals are fundamentally indifferent to material comforts and rewards. Money and material status symbols are not their goal. They can live with affluence, but it is in no way necessary to them.

12. *A yearning for the spiritual.* These persons of tomorrow are seekers. They wish to find a meaning and purpose in life that is greater than the individual. Some are led into cults, but more are examining all the ways by which humankind has found values and forces that extend beyond the individual. They wish to live a life of inner peace. Their heroes are spiritual persons—Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Teilhard de Chardin. Sometimes, in altered states of consciousness, they experience the unity and harmony of the universe.

These are some of the characteristics I see in the person of tomorrow. I am well aware that few individuals possess all of these characteristics, and I know that I am describing a small minority of the population as a whole.

The striking thing is that persons with these characteristics will be at home in a world that consists only of vibrating energy, a world with no solid base, a world of process and change, a world in which the mind, in its larger sense, is both aware of, and creates, the new reality. They will be able to make the paradigm shift.

CAN THE PERSON OF TOMORROW SURVIVE?

I have described persons who are sharply at variance with our conventional world. Can they—will they be permitted to—survive? What opposition will they meet? How may they influence our future?

Opposition

The emergence of this new person will be opposed. Let me suggest the opposition by a series of sloganistic statements that may communicate something of the sources of antagonism.

1. *“The State above all.”* The past decade has given us ample evidence that in the United States, as well as in a majority of other countries, the governing elite and the massive bureaucracy that surrounds them have no place for dissenters or those with different values and goals. The new person has been and will be harassed, denied freedom of expression, accused of conspiracy, imprisoned for unwillingness to conform. It would take a massive—and unlikely—awakening of the American public to reverse this trend. Acceptance of diversity of values and lifestyles and opinions is the heart of the democratic process, but it no longer flourishes well in the United States. So these emerging persons will certainly be repressed, if possible, by their government.

2. “*Tradition above all.*” The institutions of our society—educational, corporate, religious, familial—stand in direct opposition to anyone who defies tradition. Universities and local public schools are the institutions likely to be the most hostile to these persons of tomorrow. They do not fit their tradition and they will be ostracized and ejected whenever possible. Corporations, in spite of their conservative image, are somewhat more responsive to social trends. Even so, they will be in opposition to the person who puts self-realization ahead of achievement, personal growth above salary or profit, cooperation with nature ahead of its conquest. The church is a less formidable opponent. And family and marital traditions are already in such a state of confusion that the antagonism, though existent, is not likely to be effectively implemented.

3. “*The intellect above all.*” The fact that these emerging individuals are attempting to be whole persons—with body, mind, feelings, spirit, and psychic powers integrated—will be seen as one of their most presumptuous offenses. Not only science and academia, but government as well, are constructed on the assumption that cognitive reasoning is the *only* important function of humankind. There is the conviction that intelligence and rationality can solve anything. It was this belief that led us into the morass of Vietnam. This same conviction is held by scientists, faculty members, and policy makers at all levels. They will be the first to pour contempt and scorn on anyone who by word or deed challenges that credo.

4. “*Human beings should be shaped.*” A vision of humankind may logically be extrapolated from our present technological culture. It would involve the application of social and psychological technology to control nonconforming behavior in the interest of a regulated postindustrial society. Such controls would be exercised not by some one institutional force, but by what some term the “warfare-welfare-industrial-communications-police bureaucracies.” It is clear that one of the first aims of this complex web, if this conforming image prevails, would be to control or eliminate the person I have been describing.

5. “*The status quo forever.*” Change threatens, and its possibility creates frightened, angry people. They are found in their purest essence on the extreme political right, but in all of us there is some fear of process, of change. So the vocal attacks on this new person will come from the highly conservative right, who are understandably terrified as they see their secure world dissolve; however, these conservative voices will receive much silent support from the whole population. Change is painful and uncertain. Who wants it? The answer is, *few*.

6. “*Our truth is the truth.*” True believers are also the enemies of change, and they will be found on the left, on the right, and in the middle. They will not be able to tolerate a searching, uncertain, gentle person. Whether young or old, fanatically left wing or rigidly right wing, they must oppose this process individual who *searches* for truth. Such true believers *possess* the truth, and others must agree.

So, as these persons of tomorrow continue to emerge into the light, they will find increasing resistance and hostility from these six important sources. They may very well be overwhelmed by such forces.

A More Optimistic View

Though they will be opposed, I have an increasing confidence that these persons of tomorrow will not only survive, but will constitute a highly important ferment in our culture.

The reason for my optimism lies in the persistent development and flowering of all of the changes in scientific, social, and personal perspectives. Theoretical physics is not going to be put

back into some previous box. Biofeedback can only go forward, not regress, and continue to unfold the undreamed-of powers of our inner and nonconscious intelligence. An increasing number of persons will experience altered states of consciousness. And so on, and so on, through the whole list. In other words the pressures will continue building up until they force a paradigm shift.

The persons of tomorrow are the very ones who are capable of understanding and absorbing that paradigm shift. They will be the ones capable of living in this new world, the outlines of which are still only dimly visible. But unless we blow ourselves up, that new world is inevitably coming, transforming our culture. This new world will be more human and humane. It will explore and develop the richness and capacities of the human mind and spirit. It will produce individuals who are more integrated and whole. It will be a world that prizes the individual person—the greatest of our resources. It will be a more natural world, with a renewed love and respect for nature. It will develop a more human science, based on new and less rigid concepts. Its technology will be aimed at the enhancing, rather than the exploitation, of persons and nature. It will release creativity as individuals sense their power, their capacities, their freedom.

The winds of scientific, social, and cultural change are blowing strongly. They will envelop us in this new world, this world of tomorrow, which I have tried to sketch. Central to this new world will be persons, the persons of tomorrow whom I have described.

This is the person-centered scenario of the future. We may choose it, but whether we choose it or not, it appears that to some degree it is inexorably moving to change our culture. And the changes will be in the direction of more humanness.

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