



EMERALD POINTS

RESILIENT DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE

Navigating Unity in Diversity for
Sustainable Well-Being

GIROL KARACA OGLU



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Navigating Unity in Diversity for
Sustainable Well-Being

BY

GIROL KARACAOGLU

Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand



United Kingdom – North America – Japan – India
Malaysia – China

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INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

For Ari, Maggie, Millie, Nick.

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EPIGRAPH

The problems that exist in the world today cannot be solved by the level of thinking that created them.

(Albert Einstein)

The democratic challenge is to reach an understanding not just of how we might live well as individuals but how we might live well together in environmentally sustainable and socially just arrangements.

(Joseph & McGregor, 2020, p. 129)

In governing do not try to control; if you do not trust the people, you make them untrustworthy.

Lao Tzu (551-479 BCE)

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LOGO



The earliest-known written appearance of the word “freedom” (amagi) or “liberty.” It is taken from a clay document written about 2,300 B.C. in the Sumerian city state of Lagash.

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PREFACE

This book offers a practical guide for deliberate, transformative but peaceful, and gradual change toward a reimagined democratic governance. It provides a map and a compass for navigating a path toward ensuring the sustained well-being of all living beings, human, and nonhuman. Its integrating theme is *unity in diversity*.

Sustainability refers to a dynamic property (the “viability”) of a system, of the path(s) leading to a desired outcome. In a human, and social, context *sustained well-being* is that desired outcome. “Well-being” is defined as a condition in which individuals and communities are free to pursue, and hopefully end up enjoying too, the very diverse lives they value – i.e., to live fulfilling lives at present and into the distant future.

The motivation for writing the book is the extreme pain, suffering, and injustice permeating the world we live in, partly caused by the ineffectiveness of current public-governance approaches in tackling them. At the core of this suffering is the inability of individuals and their communities to live the varied lives they value. And the defining failure of governance is its inability to provide individuals and communities with the freedoms, complemented by opportunities and capabilities, to pursue these diverse and valued lives.

Carlo Rovelli (2020) brilliantly captures the larger background to this suffering.

- The spread of war, causing extreme suffering, refugees, and instability.
- The changing climate and other ecological and medical emergencies that are putting the future of our species, and so many others, at risk.
- The current breakneck increase in economic inequality and the concentrations of wealth that are immoral and that generate conflict.
- The presence of vast nuclear arsenals that continue to represent a real and terrible risk, heightened by recent threats to use them.

One should add to this list the loss of confidence in the ability of existing institutional arrangements to deliver the environmental, social, political, and economic outcomes (the “enablers”) that are essential for individuals and their

communities to live the diverse lives they value, and loss of faith in those who have been entrusted with the responsibility to achieve this (Judt, 2010). Current governance and government arrangements are not fit for purpose – i.e., the fundamental purpose of promoting the well-being of all living organisms on a sustainable basis. Many of the answers that people used to expect from central and local government are now being sought within communities (Mathews, 2020).

Even traditional institutions such as the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) now acknowledge the validity and urgency of these concerns. The opening remarks of the OECD Secretary-General Angel Gurría to the international workshop on *Putting wellbeing metrics into policy action* (October 2019) provide testimony to this claim.

Gurría refers to challenges relating to poverty and related vulnerabilities, widening economic inequalities (now also affecting the middle classes), rising unemployment and labor-market insecurities (especially affecting the young), persistent gender divides on pay and other market outcomes, falling average life satisfaction, rising mental disorders, fewer people reporting that they have friends and family to count on in times of need, diminishing voice and influence on what governments do, and increasing concerns about climate change and biodiversity. These trends have worsened following Covid-19 (OECD, 2021). This provides the imperative for immediate action.

Jean-Paul Sartre (1960) suggested that a writer on public affairs must always answer the following questions: What do you want to change? Why this rather than that?

I want to change current governance and government arrangements that primarily serve the narrow and short-term interests of a small group of human beings at the expense of broader humanity and the biosphere. To replace them with governing *with* as well as *for* individuals and their communities (Mathews, 2020). To create a social order that places individuals and communities at the center, and a public service that serves the public at large, current as well as future generations, with an ethos of *partnership* and *stewardship*. To that end this book recommends *system*-level governance arrangements that would support the emergence of a social order that is aligned with the sustained well-being of all beings, human as well as nonhuman. The foundation of such governance arrangements would be partnerships based on *trust* (See also Mulgan, 2022). As Lao Tzu (551-479 BCE) advised us 2,500 years ago, in governing do not try to control; if you do not trust the people, you make them untrustworthy.

In a broader socio-ecological context the effective pursuit of sustained well-being also demands an appreciation that humanity is *internal* to the *biosphere* (i.e., Nature) – the part of the Earth that is occupied by living organisms. We are embedded in Nature; we are not external to it (Fig. 1). Scientific and technological progress can help human beings to understand natural laws and exploit them for enhancing the well-being of all living creatures; but it cannot help humankind to break free of natural laws. Furthermore, and relatedly, this metaphysical distinction between humanity being *external to* versus being *embedded in* the natural world has another crucial implication: production (or the output of the goods and services we produce and consume) cannot be increased indefinitely; it is bounded (Dasgupta, 2021, p. 119; Chapter 4).

The ability to regenerate is a characteristic of living systems; the biosphere’s regeneration is a key to the sustainability of humanity. Biological diversity, or “biodiversity” for short, means the diversity of life. Its decline disrupts biospheric processes, for example, the processes governing the climate system. Our individual and collective choices have an impact on the regenerative capacity of Nature. This book is an exploration of reimagined democratic governance that is deliberately aimed at encouraging and motivating human beings to make “good” choices in a broader socio-ecological context (Merz et al., 2023). Such choices will keep the broader system in which human and nonhuman lives are lived (comprising the biosphere as well as the social, cultural, political, and economic dimensions of the system) within viable

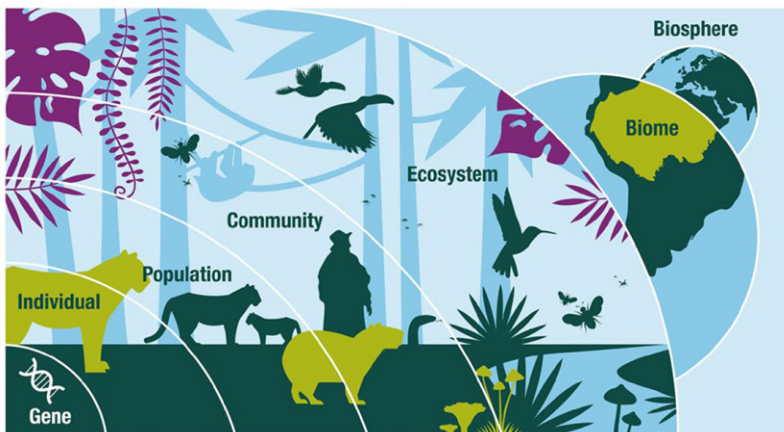


Fig. 1. Biosphere and Biodiversity (Dasgupta, 2021, p. 52).

boundaries so that we can continue living the very diverse lives we value in harmony with each other as well as with the biosphere.

A common thread that runs through this book is the proposition that in the kind of “capricious world” we live in (a world of “radical uncertainty”), with the future not only unknown but unknowable and the way people wish to live their lives is extremely varied and constantly evolving, *resilience* provides the bridge to sustainable well-being. “Resilience” refers to the attributes of being able to both *survive* and *thrive* under all kinds of conditions and in response to unanticipated disruptions to the way we are used to living. Thus, choices that enhance the resilience of the socio-ecological system that defines the possibilities and boundaries of our collective lives are “good” choices. *Diversity* in its multiple dimensions offers the strongest potential foundation, the most fertile soil, for resilience to emerge and to be sustained. *Freedom* serves as the essential nutrient for converting that potential into reality – i.e., diversity, through versatility, into resilience. Freedom needs to be complemented with *autonomy* to maximize its potency for enabling individuals and communities to live fulfilling lives.

Diversity, versatility, and interconnectedness, providing strong foundations for resilience, are inherent in and integral to the *natural order* – but not so for the *social order*. Biodiversity, the variety of life in all its forms, enables Nature to regenerate. This natural process is not automatically replicated in social systems. Diversity does not always sit comfortably in a social context. Even when it exists social diversity does not naturally lead to sustained well-being as an outcome. Transforming the potential that diversity offers as a platform for resilience and thereby a bridge to sustainable well-being into reality by pursuing *unity in diversity* is the distinctive role of good governance in a social and ecological context. *Empowering communities*, complemented by appropriate *system-level* support and controls while insisting on clear accountabilities, offers the most promising strategy for giving effect to such reimagined democratic governance.

Such a social order and supporting governance arrangements need to be deliberately and purposefully constructed and protected. Institutions protecting and nourishing freedom will serve as the main instruments of good governance – freedom *from* any form of domination and freedom *to* live the lives we value. The role of good governance extends to ensuring that individuals and communities have the opportunities and capabilities (i.e., the *autonomy*) to convert their freedom to fulfilling lives.

Wise governance, one that embraces diversity and wishes to nourish the potential for versatility that it offers, acknowledges the need to reimagine itself. With increasing diversity comes the realization that no form of “central

government” will be accepted as an agent for the “community as a whole.” The greater the degree of diversity in a community the greater the potential it offers as a foundation for sustainable well-being through resilience. However, greater diversity also diminishes the effectiveness and efficiency of central top-down governance structures to achieve that convergence from diversity to resilience through versatility. Governance needs to be reimagined to remain fit for that purpose. To use economics jargon there are diseconomies of both scale and scope for central governance and government from increasing diversity as a foundation for versatility and hence resilience.

Imagine the role of good governance as that of a *steward gardener* caring for a “well-being garden” (serving as a metaphor for the broader socio-ecological system) for the benefit of all creatures working on and living off the garden in their very diverse ways, in harmony with each other and into the indefinite future. Pursuing this imagination, this book explores the foundations of a *social order* that emulates the rules and values of the *natural order*. Such a social order will be founded on the principle of non-domination in all spheres of life and grounded in *unity in diversity*. It will embrace the principle of equity regarding both *responsibilities* and *rights* in caring for the well-being garden as well as enjoying everything it has to offer.

How will we know if we are succeeding – if the governance arrangements proposed in this book are working? To serve that purpose, we need an integrating analytical framework that captures the interdependencies and complementarities between the key outcomes that define a healthy socio-ecological system. We also need a vehicle (a model) that can help us appraise and evaluate suites of policy interventions in terms of their contributions to sustained well-being. Finally, to make all this possible, we need a common metric (a common “currency”) that can be used to aggregate and compare the collective impacts of these interventions on a set of seemingly incommensurable outcomes. In Chapters 9 and 10, I provide such an analytical framework. In Chapter 12, I provide the required model and unifying currency (i.e., well-being).

Before I embark on this expedition of exploring a social order that may help improve not only the daily lives of individuals and communities but their long-term well-being as well, one crucial point needs to be emphasized. There is nothing new in this sort of agonizing; that is in the search for better social orders. The origins of such explorations can be traced back at least 2,500 years. They are regularly revived whenever the dominant social orders of the day come under stress. In this specific sense history does repeat itself (Segall, 2023).

Two thousand five hundred years ago, and repeatedly since, thoughtful minds have pondered questions such as the ones I am exploring in this book. What is the best way to organize government in support of an equitable social

order where everyone has a chance to flourish? How can we ensure that individuals and communities are able to freely strive to reach their potential so that they can live fulfilling lives? The catalyst for these explorations has always been the accumulation and abuse of power in the hands of various concentrated interest groups (landowners, aristocratic groups, kings, “churches” of all varieties, priests, colonial powers, business classes, and so on) and the institutions that represent them. Such abuse has repeatedly brought communities (including Indigenous Peoples) close to the point of social breakdown under the weight of the stresses it generates.

Two thousand five hundred years ago, Confucius, Socrates, and the Buddha, living and teaching in different parts of the world, separated by great distances and almost certainly totally unaware of each other’s existence let alone teachings, and speaking completely different languages, were converging on the view that the social order of the time had to change. From one where power and wealth were passed down exclusively through hereditary bloodlines, to alternative orders that were more open to social mobility. This in turn provided fertile ground for the emergence of the idea that what is available to the few should and could be available to all (Puett & Gross-Loh, 2016).

At present, the state, supported by the bureaucrats, administrators, and consultants who advise and serve it, the public and private sector institutions (national and international) that have been created to legitimize and reinforce their powers, and monopoly capital are the interest groups in whose hands power is being concentrated and abused for the benefit of the privileged few and at the expense of the great majority of human beings and their communities as well as nonhuman beings. In response, and yet again, we are asking similar questions to those posed by the Buddha, Confucius, and Socrates about 2,500 years ago, right around the world, and exploring social orders that may address and transform this imbalance in favor of individuals and communities at large.

What are our chances of succeeding in this endeavor, having failed persistently in the past? Very small. And why do we have any hope of succeeding? Because we are at a touching distance from the edge of the abyss. The whole life system is threatened; we risk severe suffering if not extinction if we fail. Therein lies the source of my hope (See also Martin Wolf, 2023).

In Chapter 10 I suggest that “communalism” (Bookchin, 2006) (or what Andreas Chatzidakis et al. (2020, p. 63) refer to as “progressive municipalism”), founded on the principles of non-domination and the freedom for all to pursue the lives they value, offers a promising platform for the emergence of fit-for-purpose social governance arrangements. Such governance arrangements would

empower the communities (geographic and virtual) in which people live their lives and interact with each other, providing a fertile ground for the emergence of polities, a public service, and public institutions that adopt and embrace a *stewardship ethos* dedicated to promoting and protecting the long-term well-being of the communities they are there to serve.

Endowing communities with greater voice, autonomy, and resources cannot by itself serve as a panacea for all our social, political, natural, and economic ills – certainly not. Nevertheless, by nourishing diversity, inclusion, and equity, it offers the promise of contributing to less extremism and greater social cohesion, as well as greater material prosperity, without damaging the health of the biosphere.

“Communalism,” by offering a promising social platform for embracing diversity and facilitating inclusion, would also liberate individuals and their traditional close-knit communities from the trappings of established patterns of thinking, behaving, and living. In thus encouraging the adoption of broader and longer term perspectives in making choices, it would align the *social order* with the *natural order*, providing a bridge to sustainable well-being. To achieve all this “communalism” needs to be complemented and supported by strong governance arrangements that play a stewardship role for the environmental, social, political, and economic *system* at large (See also Rajan, 2019).

I elaborate on these themes and proposals in *Part B*, the main part of the book, focused on improving public policy and governance in practical ways, in the service of sustainable well-being. *Part A*, based primarily on a limited set of secondary sources, provides a sketch of the metaphysical and philosophical foundations of the idea that everything is connected. I use this as a platform on which I build my proposal for a reimagined governance aimed at establishing a social order grounded in *unity in diversity* – one that is in tune with the sustainable well-being of all living beings. That platform needs to be supported by a shared narrative. Devoid of metaphysical and philosophical foundations, such a narrative would not endure and offer lasting value. Nevertheless, readers who have no interest in the metaphysical and philosophical foundations of the public policy framework I propose can, having read this *Preface* to the book, skip directly to Chapter 8.

One final point needs to be made about the structure of the book. The title of each chapter has the name of one or two scholars associated with it. It is almost certain that over the centuries and even very recently, many other scholars from across the world would have studied and written extensively on the concepts of unity and diversity, representing various geographies, genders, and ethnicities, some of whom I refer to in the chapters and some (possibly

many) I know nothing about. Indeed, the latter may well include scholars who have contributed to the development and/or articulation of the same ideas more substantially and in far better ways than the ones I cite, while also covering other dimensions of diversity and unity relating to technology, kinship, identity, and so on. This does not matter for my purposes. My interest lies in identifying the ideas that serve as building blocks in the development of the specific policy framework that I propose in *Part B* of the book. I have learned about these ideas from the individuals whose works I cite. I make no claim to comprehensiveness, nor to contributing to scholarship on the origins, articulation, and/or further development of these ideas.

This book is written for and dedicated to the young. To slightly paraphrase Thomas S. Eliot in his *Preface* to Simon Weil's *The Need for Roots* (1949): "This book belongs in that category of prolegomena to [public policy] which politicians [and public servants] seldom read, and which most of them would be unlikely to understand or to know how to apply.

Such books do not influence the contemporary conduct of affairs: for the men and women already engaged in this career and committed to the jargon of the marketplace they always come too late. This is one of those books which ought to be studied by the young before their leisure has been lost and their capacity for thought destroyed in the life of the hustings and the legislative assembly; books the effect of which, we can only hope, will become apparent in the attitude of mind of another generation.

This defines my hope and aspiration for this book.

Giril Karacaoglu
October 2023

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INTRODUCTION – IN SEARCH OF BENJAMIN’S AND XUNZI’S *NEW FUSION*

Current governance and government arrangements are not fit for purpose – i.e., the fundamental purpose of promoting the well-being of all living organisms on a sustainable basis. Transformative change which encourages and embeds new ways of thinking and living is essential.

This book searches for the threads of these new ways of thinking in the wisdom accumulated over the ages and distilled and transmitted by brilliant and diverse minds – but without being captured by any of their ideologies and dogmas. In this endeavor, I aspire to emulate Walter Benjamin and the Confucian scholar Xunzi who preceded Benjamin by around 2,200 years, who were both able to stand above all currents, at the crossing of the ways, with an open mind exploring a *new fusion* – searching for a new way of thinking that could not simply be reduced to its components (Löwy, 1988, pp. 95–126; Puett & Gross-Loh, 2016, Chapter 8; Bernstein, 2010, 2013; Habermas, 2010; Van Norden, 2017).

Following the lead of Benjamin and Xunzi, I too wish to weave together diverse, and sometimes seemingly irreconcilable, threads of wisdom into a new fusion of my own, offering a lens through which approaches to familiar and persistent natural, social, and economic problems can be explored from new angles. In this search, I am inspired by the classical Chinese Daoist philosophy with its emphasis on the *Dao*, “the Way” (Tzu, 551–479 BCE).

The *Dao*, or “the Way,” “is not a harmonious ‘ideal’ we must struggle to follow. Rather, the Way is the path that we forge continually, through our choices, actions and relationships. We create the Way anew every moment of our lives. [...] There was no unified vision of the Way, with which all [ancient or classical] philosophers would have agreed. [...] But they agreed that the very process of building it has endless potential to transform us and the world in which we live” (Puett & Gross-Loh, 2016, pp. 13–14).

Thus, “the Way” is not a search for *the* truth, *the* “good life” or a pre-defined utopia. It is a search for social spontaneity, opening our minds to all possibilities and alternative perspectives, embracing and nourishing diversity

in its multiple dimensions so that following Zhuangzi's wisdom we have an opportunity to see things differently – seeing all things from an unlimited perspective. All this in pursuit of one common goal, the sustained well-being of all beings, human and nonhuman. I propose, following many others, that the only sustainable path to “the Way” is *freedom*.

All these threads of knowledge and wisdom in one way or another relate to “the primordial human quest to understand the universe and our place in it” (Horgan, 1997, p. 6) as well as exploiting natural laws in our favor. “That physics has something to say about our connection to the universe is not so surprising. Science and religion have the same roots, and still today tackle some of the same questions: Where do we come from? Where do we go to? How much can we know?” (Hossenfelder, 2022, Kp. 91).

The strongest overarching theme that sits above and across all varieties of this human quest, whether they are of a scientific, religious, or philosophical nature is the theme of *unity* – unity in diversity, not in uniformity. This is the essence of the collective wisdom accumulated over the centuries which I wish to preserve in my proposed new fusion as a guide for improved democratic governance.

Many diverse and rich perspectives have been offered on the theme of unity in the context of the *natural order*. Rupert Sheldrake (2020) provides a most useful survey and summary of these perspectives drawing on scholarship from all corners of the world. Satish Kumar (2021) and many others describe a natural order which is portrayed by the unity of all living species. Self-regulation and self-organization and mutual support, not domination, are the guiding principles of the natural order. According to Rupert Sheldrake (2020), “genes are not individualistic and selfish, despite the rhetoric suggesting they are. As parts of larger wholes, they work co-operatively in the development and functioning of organisms. If they have any moral message for humans, it is that life depends on working together and not on ruthless competition” (p. 184).

And here is how the neurologist Grey Walter describes the workings of the brain, another component of the “natural order”: “We find no boss in the brain, no oligarchic ganglion, or glandular Big Brother. Within our heads our very lives depend on equality of opportunity, on specialisation with versatility, on free communication and just restraint, a freedom without interference. Here too, local minorities can and do control their own means of production and expression in free and equal intercourse with their neighbours” (cited in Ward, 2004, p. 98).

In that same spirit, Merlin Sheldrake (2020) tells the wonderful story of how fungi, plants, bacteria, and trees are connected via “wood wide webs” in

support of each other: “From these roots, a fungal network laced out into the soil and around the roots of nearby trees. Without this fungal web my tree would not exist. Without similar fungal webs no plant would exist anywhere. All life on land, including my own, depended on these networks” (Kp. 1) (See also Lovelock, 2020).

Diversity and interconnectedness, providing strong foundations for resilience, are inherent in and integral to the natural order. Maybe the natural order of unity and harmony underpinned by mutual dependence and support that Merlin Sheldrake (2020) so beautifully and passionately describes was created deliberately by a purposeful all-encompassing divine mind, or by intelligent design, or maybe it just happened by accident. I do not know but I am happy to keep an open mind. I too, like Seth Segall (2015), am “strongly drawn to process-relational descriptions of reality that clarify our mutual interdependence with all things”.

Unfortunately, this harmony, the harmonious evolution of the natural world in very creative ways, gently guided and nudged in the direction of greater freedom, creativity, and mutuality, does not naturally translate into human social relations or indeed human interactions with the natural world. There is no evidence for the existence of such a *good* (as distinct from an *evil*) “attractor” (Dasgupta, 2021; Palmer, 2022, p. 55) for the evolution of social order. “The crises of our era are essentially crises of failures in relatedness, whether with our biosphere or with our neighbors as we tribally-oriented humans – in other words, all of us – are necessarily confronted with the difficulties of living cheek-to-jowl with strangers-turned-neighbors in the global village” (Segall, 2015).

Walter Benjamin's (1940) *Theses on the Philosophy of History* can be read as a critique and rejection of historical materialism which represents the past as a continuum of progress (Löwy, 1988, 2001). Fyodor Dostoyevsky (1918) agrees: “In short, one can say anything about the history of the world – anything that might enter the most disordered imagination. The only thing that one can't say is that it's rational. The very word sticks in one's throat.” So does John Dewey (see, e.g., Bernstein, 2020; McDermott, 1981), who did not believe in an ideal end state, taking instead the current state of social organization as a given and arguing that changes can only be made here-and-there in a piecemeal fashion as the current situation allows, with small changes aggregating over time, but no guarantee that history is moving us toward a “good attractor” (see below).

Laws of the natural order are out there waiting to be discovered using the human mind, with its distinctive attributes of reason and consciousness (or imagination). Social order, especially if it is to be founded on *unity in diversity*,

must first be constructed and thereafter constantly maintained. Social unity does not exist in advance of such composition although it may have been so thousands of years ago (Graeber & Wengrow, 2021). Nor will it be based purely on reason and rationality. We have to find our own way (the *Dao* – “the Way”) (Tzu, 551–479 BCE; Puett & Gross-Loh, 2016, pp. 87–117). A social order that reflects the natural order and is fully aligned with it will have to accommodate and embrace emotions, passions, and spirituality in all their diversity, as well as reason and consciousness, if it is to serve as a platform for sustainable well-being.

Given my primary interest in the construction of a *social order* that supports the sustained well-being of human and nonhuman beings based on a platform of unity, I am strongly attracted to those explorations that emphasize and seek unity in *diversity*, as distinct from unity in *uniformity*. As Matthew Segall (2018), drawing on the works of Alfred Whitehead, William James, Isabelle Stengers, Bruno Latour, and others, explains it, the modern version of the philosophy underpinning unity in diversity is *ontological pluralism* (see also James, 1958; Viney, 2022; and the Global Centre for Pluralism (<https://www.pluralism.ca/>)). This is a hopeful approach, a speculative narrative, not an ideology, that invites us to replace the concept of a unity based on oneness or wholeness (one nature, one God, one science, one truth, one ideology, ...) as a starting point, with one that adopts instead *plurality* and *diversity* in all its dimensions (again, think of the *Dao* – “the Way”) including multi-naturalism, multiple sources of knowledge and ways of knowing, multiple wholes, multi-cultures, ... as a platform on which we deliberately construct unity. Its roots can be traced back at least 2,500 years to the wisdom of the Buddha, Confucius, Socrates and their students and disciples.

Starting with the observation that diversity across all domains of existence (natural, physical, social, individual, ...) is a given, ontological pluralism adopts a *socio-ecological perspective* and urges us to collectively, and deliberately, invent ways of coexisting not only in harmony with each other but also with all other organisms (i.e., our living and evolving environments) – in pursuit of a “democracy of fellow creatures.”

I imagine the socio-ecological system that provides a home for such a social order, representing a fully integrated environmental, social, political, and economic *system* as a “well-being garden.” “Fractal geometry” (see below) can serve, at least conceptually, as the underlying geometry for the “garden,” suggesting that the structure of the “well-being garden” is not affected by the aggregation level at which we conceptualize a “community” (local, regional, national, international). I then ask and answer the question, what governance arrangements will have a high likelihood of guiding this system toward such a

“good attractor” and then making sure that, once reached, it continues to operate within it without crossing any of the vital boundaries that define its perimeter.

I suggest in chapter 11 that “communalism” (Bookchin, 2006), offering one way of institutionalizing the core principles of nondomination and the freedom for all to pursue the lives they value, as championed by the political philosophy and movement of “anarchism,” provides a promising platform for such a social order. I have no interest at all in the various ideological debates that have surrounded “anarchy” and “anarchism” over the centuries. My exclusive interest centers on the principle of nondomination in all spheres of life, private and public, that the philosophy of “anarchism” endorses and advocates. As Noam Chomsky (2013) explains, anarchism is based on the basic principle that any form of authority or domination has a burden of proof to bear; it must demonstrate that it is legitimate. I am interested in identifying a social order that is based on the principle of the equal freedom for all and then exploring a path, a peaceful, cautious, and gradual one, which leads humanity to that social order.

A DIGRESSION ON ED LORENZ’S FRACTAL GEOMETRY OF CHAOS

The mathematical concept of “attractor” is an extremely useful one in thinking about whether a system (a natural, physical, social, economic, . . . system) tends toward a specific configuration – not necessarily a predetermined one. And, quite critically for public policy, whether a set of policy interferences with the system can guide or nudge the system to a “good” configuration – instead of a “bad” or “evil” one.

In the context of this question and by way of an illustration only, consider the diagram in Fig. 2 which approximates the Lorenz “attractor” as represented by a computer (Palmer, 2022, p. 56). The underlying geometry of this attractor is *fractal geometry*. No matter where you start in “state space,” the Lorenz equations (represented as a work of art in the second picture of Fig. 2) will take you closer and closer to this attractor – conceptualized as an “emergent property” of the Lorenz equations. And no matter how close or away you zoom into the underlying set defining this attractor, its structure is preserved (a key feature of fractal geometry) – a fractal is a system with similar properties at all scales (Kersgaard, 2020).

There are two lobes in the “attractor” diagram. We do not know in advance whether the system will tend toward one or the other – say, the

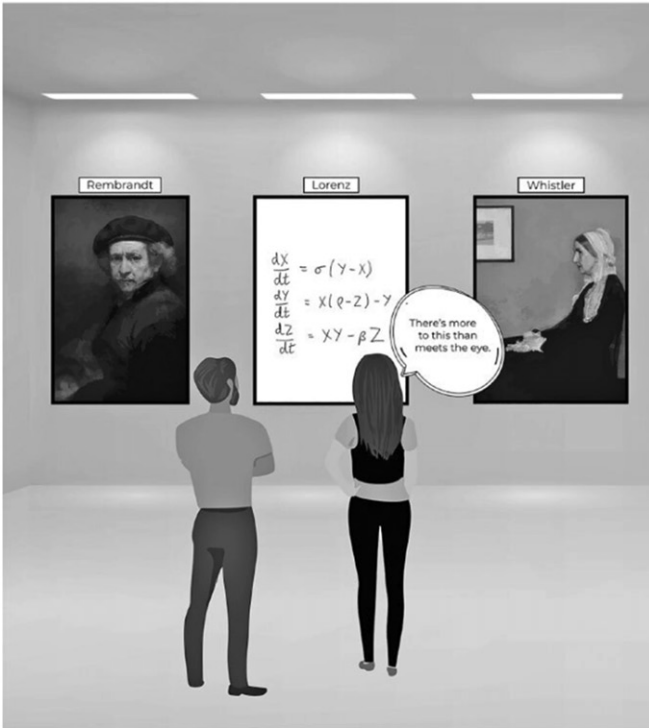
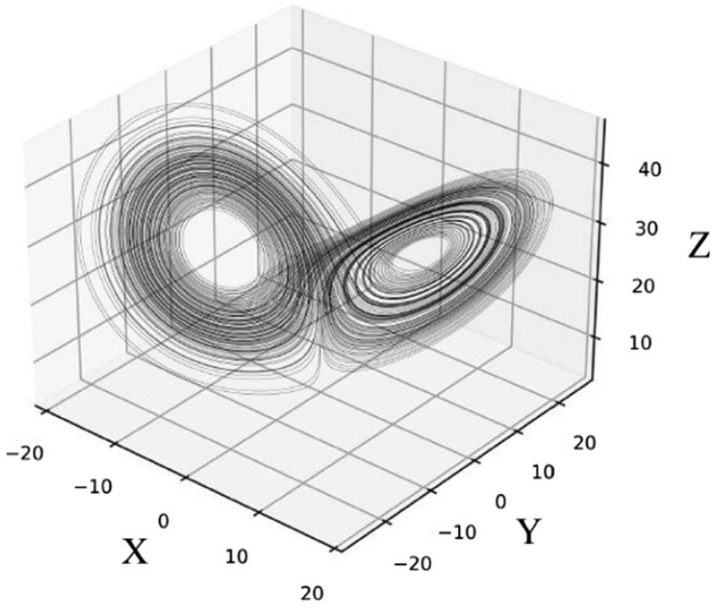


Fig. 2. Ed Lorenz's Fractal Geometry (Palmer, 2022, p. 56).

“good” one or the “evil” one. However, by introducing an “external perturbation” or a “forcing” (think of a policy intervention), we may be able to influence the likelihood of the system being pulled toward one of these lobes – in the case of the desired social order toward the “good” one. In essence, we are exploring the characteristics of a social order that will pave the *Dao* (“the Way”) to the “good” lobe.

Here is the fundamental question I attempt to answer in this book. What types of governance arrangements offer the best chance of guiding what is essentially an adaptively complex, self-organizing, multi-agent, multidimensional, and nonlinear “chaotic” (environmental, social, political, economic) *system*, toward a “good attractor” (serving as its emergent property), through peaceful and mutually supportive (or caring) cooperation?

I proceed as follows. First, I identify and describe the key features of a social order that is in full alignment with the natural order founded on unity in diversity. Second, I explore the attributes of a (natural, social, political, economic) system that would provide a strong and enduring foundation for such a social order. Third, I outline the governance arrangements that would support the emergence and sustainability of such a system. Fourth, I shine the light on a path that may gradually and peacefully lead to such governance arrangements using our current institutions as a starting point and platform. Finally, I explain the basis of my optimism for the discovery and pursuit of this path.

SOCIAL PLANNER OR STEWARD GARDENER?

In doing so, I am not looking for “the truth” – *the* path – another ideology or dogma. My purpose rather is to compose a narrative of hope for the sustained well-being of all living creatures, founded on an open-minded exploration of numerous diverse possibilities (the *Dao* – “the Way”).

The aim of “good governance” in my sense would be to create and nourish a social order that recognizes, embraces, and celebrates the multiplicity and diversity of perspectives and valued lives. One that attempts to create and sustain a “well-being garden” (i.e., a socio-ecological system) where these diverse lives can be enjoyed in harmony with both nature and across communities. One that pursues the well-being of all living species, grounded in a new mindset – the mindset of a *steward gardener* rather than that of a *social planner*.

A *social planner* has the mindset of a director, controlling and directing the process of change in search of “the right” preconceived and (possibly)

predetermined outcomes, as if we were solving purely mechanical problems. A *steward gardener* on the other hand deals with living and responsive organisms. S/he has the mindset of liberating and supporting creative change processes, creative evolutions, underpinned by a rich sense of diversity in all its dimensions. Her focus would be on creating the conditions founded on partnerships, trust, and empowerment, satisfying very diverse tastes and lifestyles on a sustainable basis. A *steward gardener* would also use the knowledge gained from local experimentation in a variety of environments as a source for sharing success stories for the benefit of the health of the “garden” at large.

Here is the mindset of a social planner and the problem he is focused on solving, as stated clearly by Nobel Prize winning economist Amartya Sen (2017, p. x):

A society consists of a group of people with a variety of preferences and priorities. To make fitting social decisions on behalf of the group as a whole, the society must take serious note of the people’s (possibly diverse) views and interests. Aggregate assessment is central to social choice theory, but to determine how such aggregate social decisions should be made is not an easy task. There can be, as Horace pointed out long ago, ‘as many preferences as there are people’. That is the task that social choice theory has to address.

By contrast, a steward gardener, taking the diversity of human preferences as a given and respecting people’s (and their communities’) rights to want to live fulfilling lives, focuses on creating the essential conditions that will enable them to pursue their valued lives. There is no need to make social decisions on behalf of the group as a whole. Assessment remains critical but it does not need to rely on aggregation (see Chapter 12).

At the same time, the “gardener” (in a social governance context) would want to ensure that these evolutionary paths representing diverse ways of living do not get close to crossing vital (natural, social, political, economic) boundaries – that they are *viable* or *sustainable* evolutionary paths. We have no idea where such evolutions, underpinned by creative processes, will lead; there are no specific outcomes we are predicting or pursuing. Nor are there any predetermined outcomes to be discovered; they evolve in unpredictable (but possibly purposeful) ways in response to the creative interactions of living organisms. In Henri Bergson’s (1859–1941) words, “The future is not what will happen to us, but what we will do” (1911; quoted by Aghion et al., 2021). We just want to ensure as best we can, through good governance practices, that the collective impact of these evolutions of different lifestyles, different ways of living, creating, and interacting with each other and with the wider natural world, reflecting a huge range of diversity and founded on freedom, do not threaten the harmony and viability of the natural or social world which is our shared home.