



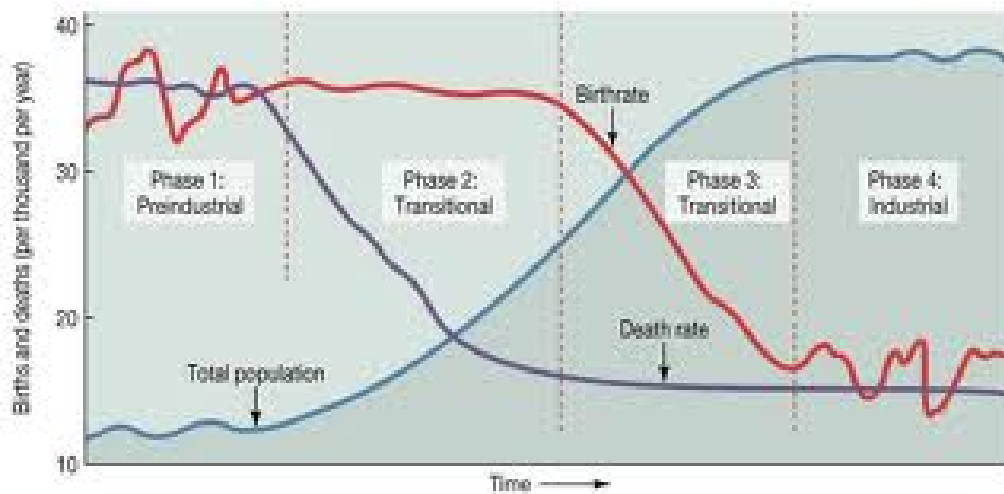
**THE WORLD AS IT IS  
AND THE WORLD AS IT COULD BE**

by John Scales Avery



*In the world as it is, 1.6 trillion US dollars are spent each year on armaments.*

In the world as it could be, the enormous sums now wasted on war would be used to combat famine, poverty, illiteracy, and preventable disease.



*In the world as it is, population is increasing so fast that it doubles every thirty-nine years. Most of this increase is in the developing countries, and in many of these, the doubling time is less than twenty-five years. Famine is already present, and it threatens to become more severe and widespread in the future.*

**In the world as it could be, population would be stabilized at a level that could be sustained comfortably by the world's food and energy resources. Each country would be responsible for stabilizing its own population.**



*In the world as it is, the nuclear weapons now stockpiled are sufficient to kill everyone on earth several times over. Nuclear technology is spreading, and many politically unstable countries have recently acquired nuclear weapons or may acquire them soon. Even terrorist groups or organized criminals may acquire such weapons, and there is an increasing danger that they will be used.*

**In the world as it could be, both the manufacture and the possession of nuclear weapons would be prohibited. The same would hold for other weapons of mass destruction.**



*In the world as it is, 40% of all research funds are used for projects related to armaments.*

**In the world as it could be, research in science and engineering would be redirected towards solving the urgent problems now facing humanity, such as the development of better methods for treating tropical diseases, new energy sources, and new agricultural methods. An expanded UNESCO would replace national military establishments as the patron of science and engineering.**



*In the world as it is, gross violations of human rights are common. These include genocide, torture, summary execution, and imprisonment without trial.*

**In the world as it could be, the International Human Rights Commission would have far greater power to protect individuals against violations of human rights.**



*In the world as it is, armaments exported from the industrial countries to the Third World amount to a value of roughly 17 billion dollars per year. This trade in arms increases the seriousness and danger of conflicts in the less developed countries, and diverts scarce funds from their urgent needs.*

**In the world as it could be, international trade in arms would be strictly limited by enforceable laws.**



*In the world as it is, an estimated 10 million children die each year from starvation or from diseases related to malnutrition.*

**In the world as it could be, the international community would support programs for agricultural development and famine relief on a much larger scale than at present.**





*In the world as it is, diarrhoea spread by unsafe drinking water kills an estimated 6 million children every year.*

**In the world as it could be, the installation of safe and adequate water systems and proper sanitation in all parts of the world would have a high priority and would be supported by ample international funds.**



*In the world as it is, malaria, tuberculosis, AIDS, cholera, schistosomiasis, typhoid fever, typhus, trachoma, sleeping sickness and river blindness cause the illness and death of millions of people each year. For example, it is estimated that 200 million people now suffer from schistosomiasis and that 500 million suffer from trachoma, which often causes blindness. In Africa alone, malaria kills more than a million children every year.*

**In the world as it could be, these preventable diseases would be controlled by a concerted international effort. The World Health Organization would be given sufficient funds to carry out this project.**



*In the world as it is, the rate of illiteracy in the 25 least developed countries is 80%. The total number of illiterates in the world is estimated to be 800 million.*

**In the world as it could be, the international community would aim at giving all children at least an elementary education. Laws against child labour would prevent parents from regarding very young children as a source of income, thus removing one of the driving forces behind the population explosion. The money invested in education would pay economic dividends after a few years.**



*In the world as it is, there is no generally enforceable system of international law, although the International Criminal Court is a step in the right direction.*

In the world as it could be, the General Assembly of the United Nations would have the power to make international laws. These laws would be binding for all citizens of the world community, and the United Nations would enforce its laws by arresting or fining individual violators, even if they were heads of states. However, the laws of the United Nations would be restricted to international matters, and each nation would run its own internal affairs according to its own laws.



*In the world as it is, each nation considers itself to be “sovereign”. In other words, every country considers that it can do whatever it likes, without regard for the welfare of the world community. This means that at the international level we have anarchy.*

**In the world as it could be, the concept of national sovereignty would be limited by the needs of the world community. Each nation would decide most issues within its own boundaries, but would yield some of its sovereignty in international matters.**



*In the world as it is, the system of giving “one nation one vote” in the United Nations General Assembly means that Monaco, Liechtenstein, Malta and Andorra have as much voting power as China, India, the United States and Russia combined. For this reason, UN resolutions are often ignored.*

**In the world as it could be, the voting system of the General Assembly would be reformed. One possible plan would be for final votes to be cast by regional blocks, each block having one vote. The blocks might be. 1) Latin America 2) Africa 3) Europe 4) North America 5) Russia and Central Asia 6) China 7) India and Southeast Asia 8) The Middle East and 9) Japan, Korea and Oceania.**



*In the world as it is, the United Nations has no reliable means of raising revenues.*

**In the world as it could be, the United Nations would have the power to tax international business transactions, such as exchange of currencies. Each member state would also pay a yearly contribution, and failure to pay would mean loss of voting rights.**



*In the world as it is, young men are forced to join national armies, where they are trained to kill their fellow humans. Often, if they refuse for reasons of conscience, they are thrown into prison.*

**In the world as it could be, national armies would be very much reduced in size. A larger force of volunteers would be maintained by the United Nations to enforce international laws. The United Nations would have a monopoly on heavy armaments, and the manufacture or possession of nuclear weapons would be prohibited.**





*In the world as it is, young people are indoctrinated with nationalism. History is taught in such a way that one's own nation is seen as heroic and in the right, while other nations are seen as inferior or as enemies.*

**In the world as it could be, young people would be taught to feel loyalty to humanity as a whole. History would be taught in such a way as to emphasize the contributions that all nations and all races have made to the common cultural heritage of humanity.**



*In the world as it is, young people are often faced with the prospect of unemployment. This is true both in the developed countries, where automation and recession produce unemployment, and in the developing countries, where unemployment is produced by overpopulation and by lack of capital.*

**In the world as it could be, the idealism and energy of youth would be fully utilized by the world community to combat illiteracy and disease, and to develop agriculture and industry in the Third World. These projects would be financed by the UN using revenues derived from taxing international currency transactions.**



*In the world as it is, women form more than half of the population, but they are not proportionately represented in positions of political and economic power or in the arts and sciences. In many societies, women are confined to the traditional roles of childbearing and housekeeping.*

**In the world as it could be, women in all cultures would take their place beside men in positions of importance in government and industry, and in the arts and sciences. The reduced emphasis on childbearing would help to slow the population explosion.**



*In the world as it is, pollutants are dumped into our rivers, oceans and atmosphere. Some progress has been made in controlling pollution, but far from enough.*

**In the world as it could be, a stabilized and perhaps reduced population would put less pressure on the environment. Strict international laws would prohibit the dumping of pollutants into our common rivers, oceans and atmosphere. The production of greenhouse gasses would also be limited by international laws.**



*In the world as it is, there are no enforceable laws to prevent threatened species from being hunted to extinction. Many indigenous human cultures are also threatened.*

**In the world as it could be, an enforceable system of international laws would protect threatened species. Indigenous human cultures would also be protected.**



*In the world as it is, large areas of tropical rain forest are being destroyed by excessive timber cutting. The cleared land is generally unsuitable for farming.*

**In the world as it could be, it would be recognized that the conversion of carbon dioxide into oxygen by tropical forests is necessary for the earth's climatic stability. Tropical forests would also be highly valued because of their enormous diversity of plant and animal life, and large remaining areas of forest would be protected.**



*In the world as it is, opium poppies and other drug-producing plants are grown with little official hindrance in certain parts of Asia, the Middle East, and Latin America. Hard drugs refined from these plants are imported illegally into the developed countries, where they become a major source of high crime rates and human tragedy.*

**In the world as it could be, all nations would work together in a coordinated world-wide program to prevent the growing, refinement and distribution of harmful drugs,**



*In the world as it is, modern communications media, such as television, films and newspapers, have an enormous influence on public opinion. However, this influence is only rarely used to build up international understanding and mutual respect.*

**In the world as it could be, mass communications media would be more fully used to bridge human differences. Emphasis would be shifted from the sensational portrayal of conflicts to programs that widen our range of sympathy and understanding.**





*In the world as it is, international understanding is blocked by language barriers.*

**In the world as it could be, an international language would be selected, and every child would be taught it as a second language.**



*In the world as it is, power and material goods are valued more highly than they deserve to be. "Civilized" life often degenerates into a struggle of all against all for power and possessions. However, the industrial complex on which the production of goods depends cannot be made to run faster and faster, because we will soon encounter shortages of energy and raw materials.*

**In the world as it could be, nonmaterial human qualities, such as kindness, politeness, and knowledge, and musical, artistic or literary ability would be valued more highly, and people would derive a larger part of their pleasure from conversation, and from the appreciation of unspoiled nature.**



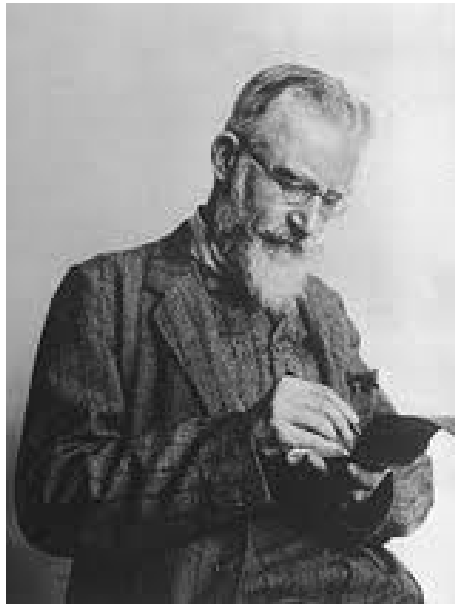
*In the world as it is, the institution of slavery existed for so many millennia that it seemed to be a permanent part of human society. Slavery has now been abolished in almost every part of the world. However war, an even greater evil than slavery, still exists as an established human institution.*

**In the world as it could be, we would take courage from the abolition of slavery, and we would turn with energy and resolution to the great task of abolishing war.**



*In the world as it is, people feel anxious about the future, but unable to influence it. They feel that as individuals they have no influence on the large-scale course of events.*

**In the world as it could be, ordinary citizens would realize that collectively they can shape the future. They would join hands and work together for a better world. They would give as much of themselves to peace as peace is worth.**



As George Bernard Shaw once said, “Most people look at the world as it is and ask ‘Why?’. We should look at the world as it could be and ask, ‘Why not?’”





