

CHAPTER 5 GOVERNMENT BY MEDIOCRACY AND THE ATTENTION ECONOMY

me·di·oc·ra·cy *mĕ-dē-ä-krĕ-sē* *n*: a new form of governance based on media as the nervous system of the new body politic (still not sufficiently analyzed by political scientists, pundits, or the media themselves).

at·ten·tion econ·o·my *ä-ten(t)-shən i-kä-nə-mĕ* *n*: a form of economy associated with mediocracies, based on the production of information, entertainment, and other goods and services that compete with politicians and educators for the attention of individuals. Attention economies are the dominant sectors in mediocracies: movies, video and audio cassettes and CDs, TV and radio, books, magazines, computers and software, advertising, tourism, education, and politics. Calculated in this way, attention sectors accounted for the lion's share of the world's GDP in 1995. It would be useful if economics, which studies scarce means applied to supposedly infinite wants, would switch its focus from money to studying the ultimate scarcity for humans: their time and attention. Spending our precious time earning inflating paper money is not worth so much of our attention.

DO WE ALL SUFFER FROM ATTENTION DEFICIT DISORDER?

Our lives are awash in info-glut: headlines, commercials, billboards, government directives, and talk-show hosts screaming for our

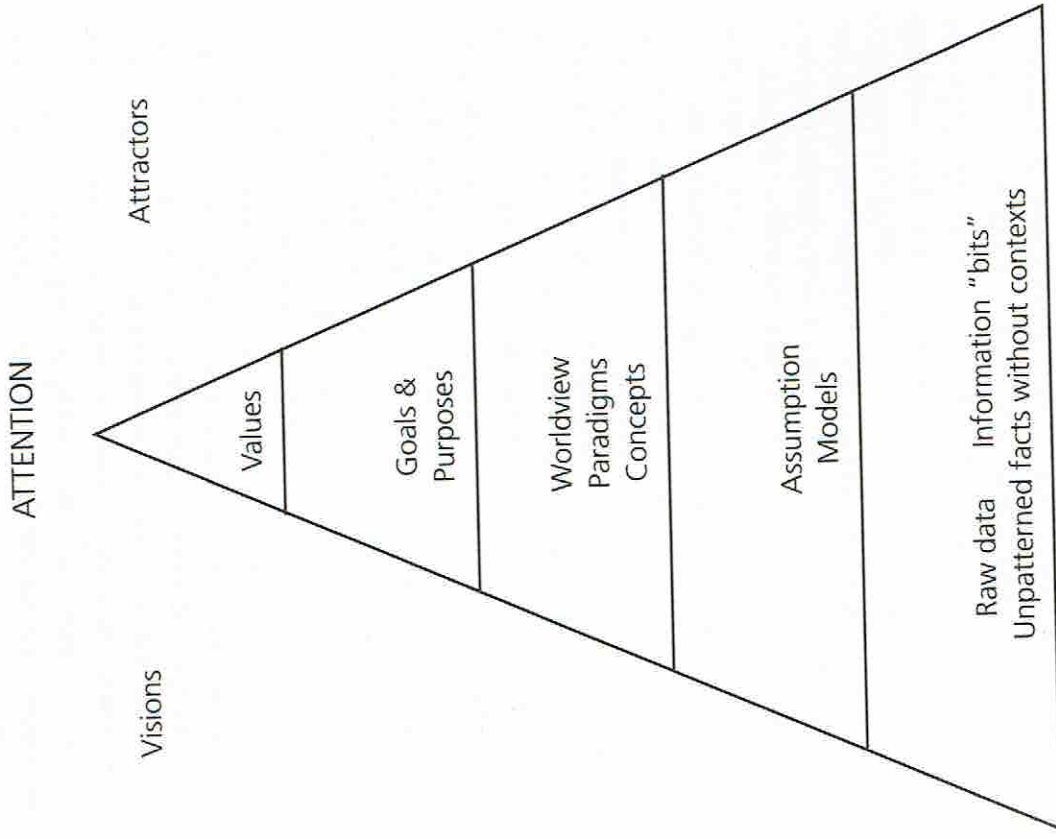


Fig. 12. Information Quality Scale
(Meaning of information as relevant to human purposes)

attention. Naturally, more of us each day are zapping the ads and simply tuning it all out. Is this a sign of the new malady, “attention deficit disorder,” or just common sense? Are our personal priorities and values reclaiming our info-battered psyches? Or are we indeed suffering from a mental disorder now catered to by legions of psychotherapists? For better or worse, the Information Age has spawned mediocracies and the emerging attention economies. Industrial economies first grew by mass-producing goods with ever more efficient machines and by selling more products to consumers eager to spend their paychecks on all the latest gadgets. Today 67 percent of our economy rests on this consumption. But these heroic feats of mass consumption, often beyond the basic necessities, now require cajoling—with \$147 billion a year of advertising—just to get our attention.

Limited “attention budgets” must be shared between job (increasingly more than one); children, spouse, and other family members; neighbors and community; politics (now global as well as local and national); career and personal development; fitness programs, sports, and club memberships; retirement and children’s college planning (if we are fortunate); not to mention vacations, entertainment, TV watching, and product consumption. As most of us have found out, there are not enough hours in the day. Each of us plays a key role in the attention economy as consumers, citizens, parents, caregivers, information processors, producers, investors, savers, and community members.

Product consumption must take its turn in line. We try to save time by shopping at home from catalogues or TV, ordering even groceries by phone, and eating at fast food drive-ins. Still Americans feel harried and overloaded. Dreams of the “leisure society” promised in the 1960s as the fruits of industrial efficiency and automation haven’t worked out. Americans have less free time than ever. People didn’t work as many hours for their necessities in the Stone Age—when we humans were gatherers and hunters (Sahlins 1972). Clifford Stoll tells us in *Silicon Snake Oil* (1995) that he regrets the decades of his time spent cruising the Internet.

I began to study what I call mediocracies (and they certainly are mediocre) in 1969 with the publication of an article in the *Columbia Journalism Review*.¹ I became a media activist, working in New York City with Amitai Etzioni and others to pass the city law that required cable operators to set up public access channels—which then spread

to many other cities. The issues have become more crucial since then: commercially profitable violence and pornography; the miseducation of children via advertising and classroom commercialism; the rise of talk-show hosts and hate-speech shows; and mad bombers who kill to demand space in the *New York Times* or blow up federal facilities to draw attention to their “causes.” Today, many of the world’s countries have gone from feudalism to mediocracy without ever having passed through the stages of industrialism and democracy. This new type of accidental government by media concentrates political power in ways unexplored by political scientists. Its dangerous trends toward new forms of totalitarianism, as well as its brighter possibilities are explored in Chapter 11. Attention economies have grown worldwide in lockstep with the spread of mediocracies, as satellites, the Internet, computer software giants, and media empires have expanded and conglomerated—competing for the attention of people in China and other awakening Asian societies and Latin America, which has spawned homegrown giants, such as Brazil’s Rede Globo TV. The African continent has remained the last outpost of traditional life.

Opinion leader Jacques Cousteau has made a new generation aware of pollution and the pressures of overconsumption and population through his TV ocean adventures. Cousteau editorialized in “Information Highway: Mental Pollution” that people’s minds were now flooded with information that increases confusion. “The mind is to be cultivated and irrigated—not flooded.” He urged people to get off the information highways and back to life’s side roads and byways.² Fritjof Capra, Jerry Mander, Joseph Weizenbaum (a computer pioneer), and many other education experts have warned against wholesale computerization of education in *The Proceedings of the Conference on Computers in Education*.³ The Center for Media Literacy and its crusading magazine, *Media and Values*, founded by former nun Elizabeth Thoman, launched a comprehensive community education curriculum with books and videocassettes, “Beyond Blame: Challenging Violence in the Media.”⁴ Theodore Roszak, insightful author of *Where the Wasteland Ends* (1972) and other critiques of late-stage industrialism, sums up the debate in *The Cult of Information: A Neo-Luddite Treatise on High-Tech, Artificial Intelligence and the True Art of Thinking* (1994). As Windows 95 and Java take over the world, my own computer is still going strong: the

portable one-pounder in my head, which has a multigigabyte memory, runs on carbohydrates and water, and is free.

THE ROLE OF MASS COMMUNICATION IN SOCIETY

My article, "Access to Media: A Problem in Democracy" in the *Columbia Journalism Review* in 1969, laid out issues still with us today:

The current public interest in all forms of mass communication reflects a growing understanding of its central role in our national life. We have schools of communications at many of our colleges, and an increasing body of scholarly analysis of the mass media's effects on our cultural and individual psyches, notably those of Harold Innes (1950) and Marshall McLuhan (1966). More people are at last realizing too, the awesome political power that comes with ownership or control over any medium of communication, whether television, radio, newspapers, magazines, wire services, computer networks, or any other system for moving information and ideas to significant numbers of people. Communication between all citizens and all their institutions is indeed the primary integrative force needed to turn our fragmented, uncoordinated body politic into a healthily functioning whole. The sum of all channels of communication in a society makes up its vital nervous system. The great challenge is to ensure that all the components of this nervous system are free and open conduits for the maximum possible interchange of information between the maximum number of citizens.

The channels of communication in the United States today are technologically advanced beyond those available to any other body politic. In fact, mass media are almost beginning to replace political parties in our system of government. They have informed and misinformed our citizens on national issues on an unprecedented scale, but in a largely unplanned manner. The mass media have shown the poor how the rich live, and have shown the rich what it is like to live in a rat-infested city slum. They have given us insight into pressing problems like "perspiration wetness," "tired blood," "bad breath," and "the blahs." They have made Americans interested in each other and whetted their appetite to communicate. But the only way to do this efficiently is by using the mass media, especially the air waves—that always seem to have an editor or owner, a licensee, or a sponsor between ordinary citizens and that precious microphone, not to

mention the "static" of endless commercials and entertainment programming.⁵

Nonetheless, radio and television sets are the most efficient tools at hand to help us understand our race relations, why cities are decaying, what politicians are saying, and what our role in the world should be. For the underskilled, broadcasting could offer nationwide job training and basic education. For children, the air waves could provide more Sesame Street-type and "Headstart" programs, without the costs of special transportation or facilities. Mass media could become a national feedback mechanism by providing a random-access conduit for all the wisdom, creativity, and diversity of our citizens.

Our mass media are only a poor shadow of what they could be—not for lack of technology, but because of our imperfect understanding of their potential power. The mass media in the United States are still operated on the notion that they are purely businesses whose primary concern is to make profits for their stockholders, and to provide a medium for merchandising goods. We have begun to learn the considerable hidden cost to society in making advertising the chief source of revenue to sustain the operations of its mass media. Since the original decision to cede the use of the air waves to private broadcasters, we have learned that if advertisers pay the cost of putting on programs, the public must pay the price of seeing only programs advertisers feel will sell their products. Instead of the justly dreaded government censorship, we ended up with censorship by sponsors and private owners.

The advertiser's desire for the largest possible audience naturally conflicts with the needs and interests of minority audiences. It also hampers the germination of new and controversial ideas, which must break into the mass marketplace if they are to gain consideration. In a sprawling country like the United States, coverage in the mass media is the only means of gaining a day in the court of public opinion. If minority groups cannot get coverage, their only nonviolent recourse is to beg or buy advertising. But here they must compete with giant corporate-product advertisers who can afford to pay \$125,000 or more a minute for prime television network time. Competition for free "public service" advertising is heating up; but here again, it has been until recently the safe causes, like "Smokey Bear" or "Give to the College of Your Choice," that are permitted to get their message through.

When civic groups "sell" their ideas and programs in competition with products and politicians, who should decide how much time and space ought to be allotted to these different purposes? Just those who own or control the media? For broadcasters and regulators, this problem is already serious. Which groups deserve free "public service" time and which must pay? If a civic group, a politician, and a product advertiser all want to buy the same limited advertising time, how will broadcasters decide whose message gets on the air and whose is blacked out? For budding civic groups, the need for publicity is a matter of life and death, and a negative decision could condemn an organization to oblivion.

Similar problems have arisen in political primaries. Politicians send advance men into an area and buy up all the available time. Other candidates arrive and find themselves blacked out. And what if a local civic group had wanted air time to raise an issue that was being inadequately covered by the candidates? Some of these matters are subject to a loose set of rules (the "Fairness Doctrine") promulgated by the Federal Communications Commission, and now continually being challenged in court, but more often these decisions are left in the lap of business.⁶

When a society is in ferment, as ours is today, pressure for equal access to public opinion through mass media increases as the old consensus splinters. New ideas and new minority opinion groups spring up everywhere. These new ideas are vital for the continual process of renewal and adaptation that prevents cultures from decaying. Such new ideas are necessarily disruptive and controversial, and therefore underfinanced and without institutional vehicles to promote them. The realization is now dawning on groups espousing these new ideas that in a mass, technologically complex society, freedom of speech is only a technicality if it cannot be hooked up to the amplification system that only mass media can provide. When the U.S. founding fathers talked of freedom of speech, they did not mean freedom to talk to oneself. They meant freedom to talk to the whole community. A mimeograph machine can't get the message across anymore.

It is entirely possible that much of the recent radicalization of American politics may be due to this media bottleneck. Minority opinion groups have discovered that whereas media ignore a traditional press release on their activities, they send reporters rushing to cover a picket line or any attention-getting "happening." Once other

groups caught on to this game, the media became desensitized to mere picketing, and escalation became necessary. Now to get the media's and, therefore, the public's attention, one must hold a college dean hostage, dance naked through the streets, throw a rock, or start a riot. In psychological terms, the news media have been "rewarding" and therefore reinforcing destructive behavior, by drawing attention to it and making national figures out of those who have learned what kind of behavior keeps them in the camera's eye.

At the same time, quiet, constructive behavior on the part of all those thousands who continually work to build and heal society is punished by the negative sanction of being ignored by the media, and never reaching society's attention. Of course, there are exceptions. Many responsible publications, as well as some unusual radio and television stations, do not make a practice of exploiting sensational news. The prevalent, oversimplified journalism is based on the time-honored editorial use of "rape, riot, and ruin" as the best way to sell the news. Until we recognize its dangerous tendencies the radicalization of politics will continue. Until minority opinion groups are provided with significant rights of access to mass media, and thereby, society's group consciousness, they will continue to behave in any aberrant way necessary to get attention. Just as the labor movement had to stay in the streets until it had won the right to an orderly channel of communication (in this case, a bargaining table) for negotiation and redress of grievances, so will the new political movements disrupt until the system can provide them open and orderly channels of communication.

The battle over the public's right of access to the mass media may well be the most important constitutional issue of this decade. The issue affects every segment of society from blacks who wish to be portrayed adequately in the media to antimilitary groups vainly trying to counteract the promotional budgets of military contractors; antipollution groups wishing to counteract the millions spent on defensive advertising, public relations, and lobbying by polluting corporations; or anticigarette groups trying to neutralize the millions spent by tobacco companies to promote the smoking habit. Until very recently, there have been only sporadic skirmishes fought for this right of access by a few embattled crusaders and citizens' groups. The first real change came in 1953, with the birth of educational television. But even today, public television is still underfunded compared with

have faith that new information, properly communicated, can change human perception of reality and therefore our attitudes and behavior. There must be a new, mature ethic of journalism, for both electronic and print media. Current mass journalism is still largely based on the old, fragmented Newtonian vision—where humans were the dispassionate, objective observers of their world. Even though few people still believe that humans can ever observe the world objectively because they are an interacting part of it, there is still a widespread lag on the part of our mass media in perception of this integral nature of reality.

The new, post-Newtonian journalism will be less concerned with aberrant, violent happenings and manifestations. Rather, intelligent, creative reporters and editors will face up to the knowledge that true objectivity is impossible, and therefore shoulder and acknowledge the heavy burden of responsibility thus placed upon them. They will analyze the complex structures and interrelationships which lie beneath surface events in the same way that only a handful of “little” magazines do today, and present this material simply for mass audiences. In a democracy as complex as ours, only if voters can obtain such simplified coverage of the parameters of major issues, can they hope to use their votes wisely. Mass media reporters will seek out injustices and pressures in society before they need erupt in violence or find expression in the “underground media.” Just as the sensory system of primitive creatures can only signal danger or dysfunction, so our primitive mass journalism has concentrated on signaling these to our body politic. Editors will seek news of the integrative activities of people, as well as their destructive acts. Like individuals, a society needs confidence in itself, and its ability to cope with its problems. We must know of human love and courage, as well as our hates and fears.

To address adequately the need for more democratic access to public opinion, as well as to meet its huge responsibilities as our most powerful educational system, mass journalism, both electronic and print, must face up to a greatly enlarged function in a complex, mass society. If it fails, the consequences may be disastrous.

UNDERSTANDING TODAY'S INFORMATION REVOLUTION

In the 1990s and beyond, information technologies spread public knowledge and make possible new ways of revitalizing local

commercial television, and our public television stations must still largely rely on local charity to mount their programs.

Pressures to democratize media have mounted and, as always, some critics are responsible and justified, and others are demagogic. Many civic groups have learned that they can challenge broadcasters at license-renewal hearings, held every three years by the Federal Communications Commission. Another response has been the explosive growth of “underground” media. Protest magazines and newspapers are proliferating and “underground radio” is beginning to flourish on FM bands held by churches and universities. The American Civil Liberties Union worked to broaden the interpretation of the First Amendment to include the concept of the public’s “right of access” to the media. Professor Jerome A. Barron of George Washington Law School advanced this concept in an article entitled “Access to the Press—A New First Amendment Right” in the *Harvard Law Review* of June 1967. He called for “an interpretation of the First Amendment which focused on the idea that restraining the hand of government is quite useless in assuring free speech, if a restraint on access is effectively secured by *private* groups.” Professor Barron thinks that the cure for suppression is government regulation through court rulings and laws to force the media to give time and space to unpopular ideas.

What can be done to democratize media and permit more citizen participation? Some broadcasters have been reexamining their policies. There have been more feedback and discussion programs on local stations, including several “ombudsman” programs to help citizens get action from unresponsive government or businesses. But efforts simply to bypass the mass media via alternative communication continue. We must remind ourselves that the present structure of our mass media was not ordained by the Almighty, but merely grew. The First Amendment should not be a cloak for our current media operators to hide behind, or to wave in our faces if we suggest anything new. We must ask, whose freedom of the press? Just the freedom of the present owners? And if so, what about citizens’ freedom of the press, and our freedom to hear the maximum diversity of opinion on all issues?

If we succeed in freeing our mass media from some of their past patterns of operation, we can decide what needs to be communicated and how to use communications to build our future. First, we must

economies starved of legal tender by central banks and other national policies. (See Chapter 9.) The same information revolution can foster the global civil society, not only through today's "narrow casting" on expensive E-mail systems or the Internet, but by expanding broadcasting capabilities and by linking television facilities and producers. Canadian-based WETV, an incipient global television consortium for sustainable development, is geared, along with other efforts, to redress global television's mental monoculture with fresh multicultural programming and news of grassroots solutions and innovations. Such grassroots TV shows can just as surely link producers in rural areas and developing countries with viewers who wish to help or to buy art and craft designs directly. There will be little need to leave the beauty of natural, unspoiled habitations and the satisfactions of traditional culture to search for a job in polluted, crime-infested urban areas. Every village could have access to opportunities, education, new technologies, and a rich variety of cultural contacts, as well as global, regional, and local news. Such grassroots, culturally diverse producers and programs are already linking the world's nonprofit television and news organizations. The currently dominant commercial television, driven by advertising to encourage unsustainable consumption and wasteful energy-intensive lifestyles, will need to be taxed rather than subsidized as in the United States.

Forms of advertising that use psychological manipulation and undercut self-esteem will need to be banned from the air waves, in spite of protestations from U.S. movie- and videomakers that this would infringe First Amendment rights of free speech. The U.S. First Amendment does not give Hollywood producers the right to encourage youths in Belize to form fighting gangs. It is also generally accepted that free speech does not include the right to advertise heroin, cocaine, or tobacco over the public air waves or cry "fire" in a crowded theater. The crowded planet, our cities, and our neighborhoods are the "theaters" now. Alternative media to cover the slow-motion good news now ignored are vital to personal development, education, and the evolution of human society and cultures. In 1997 a new Human Development Network (HDN) in the United States will carry the voices of many of the leaders and agents of transformational change already mentioned. The new healing movements and doctors, including Larry Dossey, M.D.; Bernie Siegel, M.D.; Deepak Chopra, M.D.; Carl and Stephanie Simonton; and many indigenous

healers, will have air time. Many other popular inspirational authors and workshop leaders from Barbara Marx Hubbard to Jean Houston, Chris Griscom, Marianne Williamson, and Tony Robbins will communicate in the United States on HDN.⁷

In the United States, love, angels, and miracles (to recharge our imaginations) have become fashionable again in a society suffering from overcompetition and excessive individualism.⁸ Many U.S. citizens have become appalled by our society's main exports to the world: weapons and the gratuitous violence in our TV, movies, music, and "entertainment." Many, like myself, who have traveled and seen the corrosive effects of such U.S. exports have been shamed into activism for media responsibility at home. This issue crosses all party lines and links powerfully with grassroots groups and activists worldwide. The ranks of planetary citizens are growing. As Margaret Mead correctly stated, "Never underestimate the power of groups of committed citizens to change the world. In fact, it is the only thing that ever has."⁹

Meanwhile, a subtle shift is occurring as the idea that many economies are no longer based on selling more goods, but are increasingly reliant on the provision of services, is dawning on policymakers, businesses, marketers, and pollsters. Obviously we need new scorecards beyond GNP—scorecards based on services and quality of life. Already the U.S. Commerce Department is overhauling GNP to reflect an economy largely based on services: from insurance, health, education, and local government to environmental cleanups and pollution control. (See Chapter 10.) In 1995, some 67 percent of our economy still rested on personal consumption; these heroic feats of consumption require ever more cajoling. Because many are reaching for higher purposes in their lives, new motivations and incentives come into play. Marketers must go beyond the fear and scarcity tactics and threats to self-esteem (you're not OK unless you buy this) typical of much of today's advertising and marketing.

Many aware Americans are protesting these manipulative approaches and are buying and spending more selectively. Does the company employ child labor? Exploit women and children in semi-pornographic ads? Pollute or discriminate? Sell weapons to unstable dictatorships? Does it recycle and reuse, or waste, natural resources? Socially responsible investors require that their portfolio managers, too, take these questions into account in managing their mutual funds. Many have rejected the whole "Keeping Up with the Joneses"

game. A spate of new books has hit the U.S. best-seller list, including *How Much Is Enough?* by Alan T. Durning (1992), my former colleague at the Worldwatch Institute; *Your Money or Your Life* by former stockbroker Joe Dominguez and Vicki Robins (1992); and *Enough* by financial planner James D. Schwartz (1993). These authors are featured on Oprah Winfrey and other talk shows. Earth Day 1990 brought an enormous outpouring of sentiment that accepted the necessity of more frugal lifestyles. Support groups and workshops on how to reduce consumption are becoming popular.¹⁰ Thrift shops supporting all kinds of charities are mushrooming along with cause-related marketing. "affinity group" credit cards, ecotourism, and volunteering.

Marketers use focus groups and surveys to analyze these personal growth motivations, and why spiritual books, often self-published and promoted only by word of mouth, such as *The Celestine Prophecy* and *Mutant Message*, make the U.S. best-seller lists. As politicians and marketers begin to understand that softer selling and even personal respect are necessary to deserve the attention of today's post-industrial voters—our society and economy will change accordingly. The GNP may continue to sag, but the new quality-of-life scorecards emerging in cities from Jacksonville, Florida, to Seattle, Washington, are registering the boom of the attention economy. Personal development embraces home study and independent scholarship. Courses on video and audio cassettes and self-directed studies boom, such as Florida Community College's Open Campus on cable TV. People who have taken control of their own lives offer road maps for others, for example, Melissa Everett's *Making a Living While Making a Difference* (1995) and Ronald Gross's 1982 classic, *The Independent Scholar's Handbook*. An opinion survey by the Harwood Group for the Merck Family Fund, "Yearning for Balance," found 82 percent of Americans agreeing that "Most of us buy and consume far more than we need; it's wasteful."¹¹

Attention economies may already be dominant but are statistically invisible in the maturing post-industrial societies of North America, Europe, and Japan. They augur the beginning of the end of lowest-common-denominator, instant-gratification consumerism. The attention economies began their rapid growth with entertainment, computers and software, and tourism—three of the biggest industries in the world in 1995. The growing edge of these attention

markets is world music, art and pop culture, computer software and the Internet, as well as socially concerned rock stars, following the Live Aid and Food Aid concerts of the 1980s and the outpourings of eco-concern in concerts, films, and wildlife TV specials of the 1990s. Tourism is already the world's largest industry, accounting for 10 percent of global output, jobs, and investments and 13.4 percent of the GDP in the European Union.¹² Eco-tourism is the fastest growing segment—expanding annually at 25 to 30 percent.

Another segment of the attention economy is paying attention to people who need care—whether sick, aged parents or growing children. The U.S. health-care sector was 16 percent of GDP in 1994 during the great debate about paradigms and definitions of health care. The debate became too focused on the need for more money in order to support the old-paradigm material and technological base of the health-care industry. But people concerned with wellness wanted a change from impersonal, crisis-driven, expensive, high-tech intervention. They shifted the debate to prevention, and health care's nonmaterial sector became visible. Patients need human attention and one-on-one kindness and care—often in their homes and communities.

As with other sectors, this move toward the less material information and attention services means a major reclassification of national economies. Certainly if we reclassified the U.S. economy—already consisting of 80 percent services—using the attention economy model, the attention economy would predominate, including large segments of our health-care and education systems as well as information and attention services. It would also predominate in Europe, Japan, and most other OECD countries. When statistics include human rights, refugee and peace services, and volunteers (for example the eighty-nine million men and women in the United States who give five hours or more a week to community service), a new economic picture emerges. As human beings develop, attention economies will expand and mature, serving thoughtful, caring individuals, who pay attention to the health of the planet, the human family, and their own values and higher motivations.

The U.S. entertainment sector of the attention economy, regressive from a personal development viewpoint, represents \$400 billion a year, or 8.5 percent of total consumption in GDP; employs 2.5 million Americans; and is a leading U.S. export. As the telecom bill that

The good news was that many of the voices for more frugal lifestyles at last found an international expression in The Factor Ten Club, composed of scientists and institutes of research from Britain, Germany, France, Holland, Canada, India, the United States, Switzerland, and Austria. Their Carnoules Declaration, made in Carnoules, France, in October 1994, calls for industrial countries to dematerialize their economies by increasing tenfold the efficiency with which materials and energy are used and to "reassess the centrality of material, energy, and land consumption in our cultures; reverse/reorient the incentive structures which presently discourage ecologically sensible behavior; and develop a new culture of learning; encourage research in sustainable technology and social change and adaptation."¹⁸ As the calls for dematerializing industrial economies were brought before the European Parliament, the OECD, and the International Climate Convention in 1995, the shift toward attention-based economies and their further development became more visible.

deregulated cable TV and phone companies further was signed in Washington, D.C., in 1996, many economists and experts downplayed widespread fears of monopoly. They pointed out that the technologies change rapidly and anyway, these markets are growing worldwide—so there would be plenty of competition.¹³ This not very reassuring view was underscored by another story, "One More Place You Can't Escape Ads." It seems gas pumps in the United States now will have video displays of merchandise you can order with your gasoline credit card while you are filling up.¹⁴

In 1995, as media corporations merged, nine moguls emerged in OECD countries, whose companies now have captured the attention of the human family: Rupert Murdoch, Australia's owner of the U.S. Fox network; Europe's Sky TV; Star TV in Asia along with dozens of newspapers, magazines, and publishers; Gerald Levin, boss of U.S.-based Time-Warner, owners of *Time*, *Life*, *Fortune*, and scores of other media assets from print and cable TV to film; John Malone, head of TCI, the biggest cable operation in the United States; Sumner Redstone, boss of Viacom, a \$7.4 billion conglomerate that owns Paramount, Blockbuster TV, and a chain of movie theaters; Ted Turner of Turner Broadcasting, CNN, and the Atlanta Braves baseball team; Michael Jordan, CEO of Westinghouse, who sealed a deal in 1995 to buy the CBS TV network for \$5.4 billion; Michael Eisner, boss of Disney, a \$19 billion enterprise after swallowing the ABC-Capital Cities TV network; Edgar Bronfman, CEO of Canada's Seagrams Distillers who bought MCA for \$5.7 billion; and Michael Ovitz, the Hollywood dealmaker who brokered many of these megadeals, then accepted the presidency of Disney.¹⁵ Lawrence K. Grossman, former president of NBC News and PBS, suggested that the public be cut in on the mega-mergers. He suggested a modest percentage of these deals could finance high-quality TV.¹⁶

As debates heated up over climate change, global warming, and the increase in hurricanes and floods, GNP-driven overconsumption of energy and materials by industrial mediocracies was further challenged. The Manila-based Asian Development Bank warned that a warmer planet would put much of Asia's agricultural production as well as its coastal cities at risk, while Syed Sibtey Razi, chair of India's parliamentary committee on the environment, pointed out that 25 percent of people in developed countries consume over 75 percent of many natural resources.¹⁷

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