Chapter 3

Achieving a Contented and Enriching Life

I. In Search of a Society That Encourages Dreams and Mutual Trust

In considering the future of the nation, two important factors are involved if we are to create a society that focuses not only on the nation as a collective entity but also on individuals who are able to live authentic, satisfying lives. The basic principles are peace of mind and plenitude. Since World War II, Japan has endeavored to create a society in which everyone can live an affluent life grounded in the principles of peace and human rights. As a result, people today have comfortable daily lives, and it is fair to say that they face relatively few serious direct threats to survival, such as hunger, war, or poverty. On the other hand, many people complain of anxieties about the future, both their own and Japan's. On occasion, these anxieties even extend as far as the future of the entire human race.

If, recognizing this, we were to envisage a society of peace of mind and plenitude, it would probably be a society in which people could all have their own dreams and live in mutual trust. We suspect, however, that if we were to ask what is meant by *peace of mind* or *plenitude*, we would not get a clear-cut answer. We therefore think it better to seek answers by directing our attention to the reality around us, to the anxieties that make it difficult for us to have dreams or trust one another and to lifestyles that are fraught with cold, unfeeling relationships and a shortage of time.

In addition to hunger, war, and poverty, anxieties include poor law and order, natural disasters, and other factors that threaten our survival. Society should work to alleviate these anxieties across the board. These concerns are, however, a matter of guaranteeing safety rather than peace of mind, and a detailed discussion of the issues involved has been left to other chapters. Here we will simply point out their importance. Other anxieties exist despite our affluent lifestyle and sometimes because of it. Subjective elements, such as our sense of values, are involved to a great extent. Enormous anxiety arises from doubts as to whether society is on the right path, whereas closer to home, we feel anxious about our old age and the problem of nursing care when we are older. Only people with a firmly established individuality and a clear awareness of the sort of lifestyle that they want can find solutions by addressing these problems directly. The best approach is not to rely on the national government or public institutions to find blanket solutions. Instead, we should face up to our problems directly and solve them through the vitality generated by our will to overcome them.

We human beings are not necessarily happy when we have no anxieties or troubles. We often find happiness in the very fact of overcoming anxieties and troubles through our own efforts. In other words, we should be aware that not all anxieties can be eliminated, and that happiness does not always follow when some external element eliminates anxieties for us. We should not think in terms of simply enjoying the peace of mind and plenitude guaranteed by the government. On the contrary, the government's duty is to make available an array of diverse lifestyles from which people can make independent selections. It should also remove any obstacles that may exist within current systems and, where necessary, create new support systems.

The focus should be on the human side, on the creation of a society in which individuals show tolerance and cooperation and can fulfill a creative role through autonomous action. We should seek peace of mind and plenitude, taking the view that the government's task is to nurture such individuals and establish systems and environments that will support such lifestyles. Our hope is that from this a

society of dreams and mutual trust will emerge.

II. The Nature of Anxiety and Measures to Deal with It

Human beings are unique in that they can anticipate the future and act to deal with it in an appropriate manner. This process inevitably generates anxiety, so much so that anxiety can be called a necessary concomitant of human life. We can therefore say that efforts to deal with anxiety created the basis of human culture and social activity. The first products were myths, which gave us cosmology, providing us with peace of mind by enabling us to know our position in the world and confirm our identity. With the passage of time, this led to the creation of such systems as religion and art. Meanwhile, scholarship and technology emerged from our efforts to reduce our ignorance by gaining knowledge about the outside world, to stabilize our lives by drawing on the natural world for the staples of life, and to secure our safety. Eventually, these all developed into the natural sciences, the humanities and social sciences, science and technology, social institutions, and economics.

We can argue that the various systems created in this manner have provided three factors to support peace of mind. First, they have clarified the foundations of our lives and our sense of belonging. Second, they have indicated the sort of society we should aim for and clarified our objectives by demonstrating that we can improve our lifestyles if we make the effort. And third, they have clarified social values, making it relatively easy to judge between right and wrong.

Naturally, the sense of belonging, objectives, and values mentioned here are not fixed. Social dynamism and progress are generated by a constant search for new concepts based on history and what we learn from experience. The following section looks at the anxieties currently affecting Japanese society from the point of view of the three support factors.

III. Anxieties Arising from Transition

Many people recognize that we stand at a historical turning point. There is a global awareness of change at the beginning of the twenty-first century and the third millennium. From the mid-nineteenth century through the twentieth century, Japan experienced two major social transitions, triggered by the Meiji Restoration of 1868 and defeat in World War II. Today, Japan is seen as going through a third great transition. During the first and second transitions, Japan created a growth society modeled on Europe in the First case and the United States in the second. This time, however, there are no external models for Japan to draw on, so it has to start from basic values and consider what sort of society it wants to create. Moreover, because Japan is well on the way to becoming a mature (postindustrial) society, the measures used to guarantee peace of mind in the growth society that existed until recently are no longer appropriate. If anything, the very changes taking place in the factors that have supported peace of mind to date are a source of anxiety.

1. Guarantees of peace of mind in the twentieth century

Seen from the point of view of the three support factors mentioned above, Japan's efforts can be analyzed as follows.

(1) Reinforcing the sense of belonging to organizations and systems, such as the nation and the company, based on family and regional affiliation

The Japanese nation created during the Meiji era (1868–1912) adapted the legal systems, science and technology, and educational systems of the developed countries of Europe to its own needs as it steadily modernized itself under the slogan "A rich nation and a strong military." Its success in modernizing in a relatively short time arose from the fact that Japanese society had reached a high level of maturity in the Edo period (1600–1868). Moreover, it managed to "Japanize" what it learned from Europe remarkably well, just as it had done earlier when it assimilated Chinese culture. Without going into too much detail about merits and demerits, its subsequent experiences in several wars greatly enhanced national awareness.

The slogan "Promote industry," adopted alongside "A rich nation and a strong military," resulted in the birth of a new type of large-scale production organization. Initially, the government was the prime mover, and the sources of production were public corporations and state-owned enterprises. These were steadily privatized, however, in the process not only providing many jobs and guaranteeing income for living expenses but also becoming the basis of the people's lives. The years following World War II, in particular, saw the creation of what can aptly be called "corporate families." Large corporations established the custom of long-term employment, provided various kinds of welfare facilities, and enabled employees to share recreational activities outside work. Males in the prime of life were the pillars of society. The decision to join a company that would give the head of the household peace of mind became one of the most important steps in life and was supported by the family.

(2) Using science and technology to provide prosperity, safety, and peace of mind

As numerous new technologies appeared, they were initially used for military purposes, but they gradually changed daily life as well. A wide range of chemical products, household appliances, and transportation equipment, such as automobiles, *Shinkansen* superexpress trains, and jet aircraft, gave the Japanese people safer, richer lifestyles. Advances in medical technology helped them live longer. After World War II, the Japanese sought material affluence modeled on the American lifestyle and went a long way toward achieving it. Japan created world-class technologies and production systems, manufacturing superior materials such as iron and steel and efficiently producing high-quality automobiles and household appliances that offered remarkable new features. Confidence and pride in Japan's production facilities underpinned confidence and pride in Japanese society. In this way, economic growth became a strong guarantor of peace of mind.

(3) Upholding traditional values

Although Japan used Europe and the United States as its models, Japanese society continued to be inspired by the phrase "Japanese spirit, Western learning," and remained acutely conscious that it must not lose its time-honored social values. Good examples of these values were the sense of oneness with nature, the value placed on personal relationships in the community, the handing down of traditions through the family, and pride in the Japanese language.

2. Anxieties in the twenty-first century

As we enter the twenty-first century, however, the elements that guaranteed peace of mind in the twentieth century have changed markedly. This development has given special cause for anxiety. In particular, there is serious anxiety that things will not go well if Japan simply continues to behave as

before. Intuitively, everyone is aware that a growth-based society is no longer sustainable, yet there are no hints as to what its replacement should look like. Japan is now facing an unprecedented situation in which it is no longer able to reform itself on the basis of lessons absorbed from external models. Instead, individuals must all seriously consider what sort of new society they want to build and participate in its creation.

Following are some of the anxieties arising from these changes.

(1) Changes in the shape of the nation, the company, the community, and the family

Advances in communications and transportation technologies have made the world a smaller place. People now feel that they are caught up in a massive stream of events that they cannot possibly handle alone. This trend, combined with a sense that individuals and companies are directly responsible to the entire world for their actions, makes it difficult to grasp the direction in which things are moving.

As symbolized by environmental issues, sustainability has now become more important than expansion based on progress. On the other hand, economic competition is intensifying, and we are confronted with the new issue of whether it is possible to formulate an economic system that combines sustainability with competition.

The concept of women working as full-fledged members of society has become the norm, and relationships between husbands and wives and between parents and children are changing. Things that were once taken for granted are now being questioned, including gender roles, parental responsibility for child rearing, and children's responsibility for looking after their aging parents. People are also questioning the acceptance of a work style in which the company guarantees long-term employment and seniority-based wages, and in which employees belong to the company for life. In addition, Japan's traditional rural communities have broken down as urbanization has progressed, encouraging young people to migrate to the cities and creating overcrowding on one hand and depopulation on the other.

(2) Changes brought about by rapid progress in science and technology

The rapid evolution of information technology has created a situation in which individuals and the rest of the world can be directly connected through mobile phones, personal computers, and the Internet. Although access to abundant sources of information is desirable, the free flow of all kinds of information is creating confusion. Against this background, numerous problems are arising in connection with essential issues, such as the role of the government and the need to give greater consideration than ever to personal privacy. Moreover, it is necessary to adopt global standards, but the question is where to find them. We have to look for standards that are acceptable in that they do not involve the imposition of the values of one nation or culture on others. This, too, is a difficult problem.

Advances in medicine and medical technology have made it possible to develop new techniques that allow organ transplants, prenatal screening for birth defects, and gene therapy. At the same time, these advances have given rise to the serious problem of what to do when a disease can be diagnosed but not treated. Highly sophisticated medical treatment is costly, and there are many doubts as to how far treatment of this kind is justified. Even with routine medical treatment, technological progress has not necessarily resulted in better-quality medicine. If anything, it has created awkward problems in areas such as reproductive medicine, the excessive use of medications and the emergence of drug-resistant strains of bacteria, the harmful side effects of certain medicines, and malpractice.

In industries generated by science and technology, extreme delicacy and precision in the manufacturing process have resulted in the efficient mass production of high-quality products. Resources are finite, however, and waste materials are polluting the environment. Obviously, when we talk about an affluent lifestyle, we should be aware that there are inherent limits.

Originally, human beings created science and technology for their own use. Yet there is a growing sense of anxiety that the one-dimensional sense of values that glorifies efficiency and progress has enabled science and technology to self-propagate until they are beyond our control. Nuclear power and manipulation of life forms may be considered to fall into this category.

(3) The decline and diversification of traditional values

During the democratization process that followed World War II, Japan was forced to abandon the traditions that had supported it until then. There was even a tendency to think that this was the right thing to do. In themselves, freedom, diversity, and individuality are desirable. Unless society lays down clear standards on which we can base our judgments, however, there is a danger that we will start behaving as though anything goes and will not understand how to behave in specific circumstances.

In recent years, the pursuit of material affluence and the tendency to focus on money have rapidly gained the upper hand, while spiritual matters have been neglected. As a result, there is now a general mood that encourages people to do whatever they please no matter what. It has been pointed out that among children and young people there has been an increase in bullying, suicide, and crime, including prostitution for pocket money among middle and high school girls. These problems are, however, not simply those of the children and young people involved. It is more correct to say that they have lost their ability to make behavioral judgments because society has not provided them with a clear set of values on which to base their actions.

To date, Japan has demonstrated its aptitude for absorbing and using foreign cultures through material things, but it is not yet accustomed to incorporating foreigners into its society. It is now essential to accept that one of the elements of diversification is the creation of a society in which different ethnic groups can coexist.

IV. Utilizing Transition to Create a Society Providing Peace of Mind in the Twenty-First Century

We can see how transition is creating anxiety. Change is a factor in anxiety, but if adroitly used, it should lead to the creation of a desirable future. Introducing new viewpoints (values) and policies should help to build a more dynamic society, creating a Japan where peace of mind and plenitude reign. At the same time, we can envisage a situation in which the people of the world want to share the concepts and methods involved. Individual awareness is important for overcoming anxiety, but two elements are essential to provide support: a change in our sense of values and the transformation of our social system into one that allows individuals to fulfill themselves freely. The interaction between these two elements should make it possible to create a new "public space" in which autonomous individuals accept the responsibilities of society as a community of autonomous individuals.

1. Establishment of new basic values

(1) From "mechanism" to "lifeism"

The twentieth century was an era in which a mechanistic worldview encouraged the advance of science and technology, enabling humanity to conquer nature and wield its strength unchallenged as it sought to enjoy the benefits of material wealth. At first glance, this appeared to make people happy,

but because it triggered numerous wars and destroyed a great deal of nature, we cannot claim that this lifestyle was a truly happy one. We must do something to change the current situation, in which people advocate peace, human rights, and the protection of nature on one hand while actually engaging in unceasing ethnic conflict and wiping out countless animal and plant species on the other. As the basic values for the twenty-first century, we advocate taking up the challenge of creating a society based on a "lifeist" worldview. Human beings are part of nature, just like any other living thing, and the lifeist worldview makes it possible to discover the commonalities that exist not just among all human beings but also among all living creatures. This viewpoint is based on facts revealed by modern science, but because a similar worldview actually prevailed in ancient Japan, it is more a matter of reviving that. In other words, the Japanese possess not only state-of-the-art science and technology but also an inherent sense of oneness with nature that they have inherited from their forebears. Surely there has never been a better time or opportunity for Japan to create a new society and new lifestyles based on these values and, in the process, demonstrate these values' significance to the world.

For example, whenever we speak about science, technology, and industry, we always say that Japan lacks resources. Yet if it is a question of making the most of nature, our archipelago is located in an extremely favorable spot and benefits from a long coastline and abundant water, land, greenery, and sunshine. There are also many able people living here. If we use these resources by skillfully rotating them, there must surely be sciences and technologies that will help us create spiritually affluent lifestyles even without underground resources such as oil. We believe that we need to begin developing such technologies for the future.

(2) Respect for cultural values

The society that emerged after the end of the cold war, in particular, tended to give economic values priority, and virtually everything seemed to be motivated by financial considerations. Now it is necessary to transform our society into one that fully respects cultural and natural values that cannot be evaluated in purely economic terms. As we shall discuss later, it should be possible to work positively to create a society that seeks substitutes for economic values in the workings of the heart and mind, such as respect and appreciation.

A society created from the combination of a mechanistic worldview and econocentric activities is a society of cutthroat competition. Competition is important, of course, but when it becomes ruthless it generates considerable anxiety. It is essential to appreciate values other than economic values in order to allow "comfortable competition" that allows various challenges while preserving individuality.

2. Conversion to social systems that allow individuals to fulfill themselves

It is essential that Japan possess social systems that create individuals who show tolerance and cooperation and can fulfill a creative role through autonomous action. Such systems must also make the most of such individuals and broaden the scope of their activities.

(1) Making the most of the autonomy and spontaneity of diverse individuals

Although Japan advocates respect for diversity and individuality, the fact remains that it still gives priority to uniformity in education. People support diversity and individuality, but most do not know how to exercise it. Initially, education must be reformed in such a way that it enables all individuals to look within themselves and discover their own strengths. Then, individuals should be able to select their own lifestyles autonomously and spontaneously. If they are good at making things, for example, they can decide to enhance their skills in this area. If they want to work with nature, they can select an active life in farming or fishing. Work (including housework, of course) is the basis of our livelihood,

and it is necessary to establish an educational system that enables people to regard it as worthwhile. It is also necessary to establish a value system for evaluating different kinds of work, which ultimately ties in with remuneration. Indeed, peace of mind is grounded in work and roles that are personally satisfying and are accorded social recognition. Once the foundations are laid, people will no longer have to follow a life plan that simply involves joining a stable company and spending the rest of their lives there. Instead, they will be able to seek out the kind of work that best enables them to fulfill themselves and live forward-looking lives.

Stable work naturally gives us more latitude, allowing us to turn our attention to matters other than work, including family, the community, people with similar interests, volunteer organizations, and so on. As the scope of life expands, society is revitalized. Once we create a society that enables us to work at something satisfying and value daily life instead of working within a set of values that treats production as all-important, a wide variety of richly individual people will begin to emerge.

(2) Creating a dispersed, cooperative society that dynamically links individuals

Changes in society are being accompanied by changes in elements that were supposed to remain immutable within the traditional sense of values, such as the family and the community. This is the natural result of the uniform set of values prevailing in a society that gave priority to the economy, and if the changes referred to above occur, people's feelings will once again turn toward the family and the community.

If, however, personal relationships are based on ties that are impossible to change, creativity will be stifled. Both the family and the community must allow people to participate of our own volition. That is why networking is so important. Thanks to the rapid development of the Internet and other factors, in recent years networking has created an environment that overcomes geographical constraints and allows people anywhere on earth to interact. This enriches daily life, ensures a certain degree of peace of mind during emergencies, and makes it possible to establish better relationships.

A society in which people are dynamically connected laterally and cooperate in this manner is what we call a "dispersed, cooperative society." In the twentieth century, a unipolar society was considered efficient, but its evils are now becoming apparent. Many people now advocate decentralization and devolution, but we believe it is desirable to establish systems that allow cooperation, not just dispersion.

(3) Establishing lifestyles that make the most of each stage of life

Men in their prime were primarily responsible for underpinning peace of mind in the twentieth century. They headed the household, worked themselves to the bone to drive economic growth, and ran politics, economics, and society. Although the results were impressive, this system not only exposed the individuals concerned to physical and mental overwork but also led to the undervaluation of women, children, and older people. The system also skewed social values. Boys studied purely to ensure that they could seize the best opportunities for working during their prime. Women were not given the opportunity to be active in society. And older people who had completed their working years came to be treated as a burden on society.

The real meaning of a human life is to live each stage of that life to the fullest. For example, during childhood one should learn the basics of personal relationships. But for children today to get jobs that are rated highly by society when they reach adulthood, they must pass numerous tests that emphasize knowledge. Because this becomes the objective, there is a tendency to forget about developing personal relationships.

It is important to enable people to live to the fullest throughout their lives rather than place too much weight on a particular time of life. This means creating a society that focuses on each stage of a person's life, allowing children to live fulfilled lives as children and older people to live fulfilled lives

as older people.

When we focus on life stages, we realize that the sick, the old, and the mentally and physically challenged are experiencing a stage that anyone might. We should not differentiate between the robust and the weak but rather view the latter as simply going through a stage of weakness. The creation of a barrier-free environment thus becomes something that should be a matter of course for all, not just a form of welfare for the weak. This, in turn, engenders the positive view that being in a weak state is a meaningful element of human life.

As for education, we now live in an age when study should be lifelong, not confined to a certain stage of life. In medicine, temporary infections present less of a challenge today than the increase in lifestyle-related diseases associated with aspects of daily life such as diet and exercise, sometimes affecting people throughout life. In regard to work, we believe it is desirable to actively participate in society throughout life. This means working in various capacities as long as we can, not simply getting a job at a certain age and retiring at a certain age. Naturally, there will be cases in which people select retirement for themselves. Looking at these sorts of social changes enables us to rediscover the importance of focusing on life stages and living each one to the fullest.

Because families and communities used to consist of many different people in various stages of life, it was once possible to obtain an overall grasp of human life naturally, and a great deal of wisdom about living was passed down. From now on, peace of mind will increasingly depend on the ability to plan for the longer life spans that we can anticipate as a result of longer life expectancies. As a result, we believe it will become necessary to encourage active communication among people in different stages of life.

To summarize, the sort of society that will offer peace of mind and plenitude in the twenty-first century is one based on life stages (existence, daily life, and lifelong fulfillment) in which autonomous, spontaneous individuals create dispersed, cooperative networks. The individuals who aim to achieve it must revolutionize their thinking and take action, and policies should be implemented to create the systems needed for its realization.

V. Proposals for a Society That Offers Peace of Mind and Plenitude

So far, we have argued that in the twentieth century society was unipolar and focused on production. For the future, we propose a truly affluent lifestyle that offers peace of mind and plenitude through the creation of a society based on life stages that values existence, daily life, and lifelong fulfillment and a society of dispersed, cooperative networks in which the individual is the primary actor. The individual referred to here is, of course, tolerant and cooperative, and acts autonomously and spontaneously. To create such a society, it is first necessary to build science and technology on the basis of lifeist values and form social systems that apply information so as to allow individuality full play. Moreover, new ideas and systems are necessary for the elements that support the individual: education, work, the family, the community, and social security (medical care, nursing care, and pensions). Figure 1 shows the concepts involved in diagram form. Below we discuss the elements in the figure.

1. Foundations of peace of mind

(1) Education—for anyone, anywhere, at any time

The significance of education in the broadest sense, not just school education, is a theme of importance for the entire commission. We cannot overemphasize the importance of education from the viewpoint of creating a society of autonomous, spontaneous individuals.

We propose the creation of an educational system with the objective of nurturing people who possess the basic, essential rules for living as human beings, the basic knowledge for living as members of society, and the basic knowledge and skills necessary for work. Our present educational system suffers from a serious problem in that it is not clearly aware of these needs and simply imparts knowledge without any obvious purpose.

First, everyone should be obliged to acquire ample knowledge of the basic, common elements necessary for human beings and members of society. Then, the system should allow greater freedom of choice so that each person can develop the skills best suited to his or her chosen lifestyle. If this is done, it will result in the emergence of autonomous individuals and the creation of a society that offers peace of mind and plenitude.

The basic, essential rules for living as human beings: The basis is how to associate with human beings and with nature. In the past, this was taught without any special consciousness in communities centered on the family. The family played the key role and, starting with the parent-child relationship, children learned the basics of how to associate with brothers and sisters, friends, members of the community, and animals and plants. Because of the increase in the number of working mothers and the falling birthrate, however, it is vital today that the same elements be made the basis of education in day-care centers and kindergartens. There is every reason to expect that children will become comfortable with books, learn to appreciate music, and seek knowledge of their own accord. Forcing discrete bits of knowledge on children before they have learned how to associate with nature is not the essence of education at this stage. If sound basics are instilled at this time, they will be retained for life.

The basic knowledge for living as members of society: The most important basic tools for living as members of society are language and logical thinking. The basis of an autonomous lifestyle is the ability to think, express oneself, and debate logically in one's mother tongue. As the need to be active in the international community increases, there is a growing requirement for people who can determine the most desirable course of action in any given situation by asserting themselves, understanding the other side, and talking things over.

The basic knowledge and skills necessary for work: We believe it is desirable that education be tailored to the individual's abilities, wishes, and preferences, and high school vocational education should be enhanced. The vocational education referred to here is not training in narrowly based skills but includes liberal arts education to give the student greater depth as a human being. Vigilance and the provision of ample opportunities and options with regard to the ethics and general knowledge needed as a working person are also important. Many careers require sophisticated expertise, and universities need to lay down clear rules and curricula for education to meet these requirements.

In addition to these arrangements, education should be open to those who wish to return to studying after they have commenced work. This calls for a system that allows anyone to study anywhere at any time. We believe that continued training and study will become increasingly important for working people and other adults. There is thus a need to prepare training systems that can respond to the needs of people who wish to acquire specialized knowledge or bring it up to date. Clarifying the objectives of learning provides incentives for both teachers and learners. This kind of educational system nurtures autonomous, spontaneous individuals, leading to the creation of a society in which people can make a new start along any of numerous routes at any time, thus providing the foundation for peace of mind. Moreover, when people who have gained a little freedom from child rearing or have retired start studying literature or renew their study of economics, it enriches their lives, enabling them to gain depth as human beings. Naturally, education should not take place only in schools—the family and the community are just as important. Above all, it is crucial that learners have a positive attitude and approach.

(2) Work—in a multistream society

Once noted for its long-term employment, seniority-based pay and promotion, and well-established welfare programs, the Japanese system is now floundering. Corporate management, in general, is under pressure to introduce American-style global standards, and job mobility is increasing rapidly. As a result, workers have lost the peace of mind that they used to derive from belonging to a company. This situation has exposed middle-aged and older male workers, in particular, to considerable anxiety. It is therefore necessary to think in terms of a form of job mobility that will help provide peace of mind. For this to happen, the range of options open to individuals must be broadened to enable them to make independent choices based on various values, including financial and physical working conditions, work objectives, the nature of the work, and the place of work in their overall scheme of life.

It is also important to ensure that pensions and other benefits can be transferred from one job to another and to rigorously enforce the systems and penalties necessary for correcting a labor market in which employers have the advantage. Relief for the unemployed is essential, but instead of depending on makeshift measures such as employment adjustment subsidies, there is a need for forward-looking support for the creation of new employment opportunities.

Of course, the greatest importance must be attached to stable employment as a foundation for peace of mind. It is necessary to strengthen the job-placement function of the labor market so that people can feel assured of a stable supply of work even if they do not stay in the same job permanently. We must also respect workers' decision to stay in the same workplace accumulating and enhancing knowledge and skills. In other words, we should value independent choice rather than provide a blanket guarantee of institutional stability. We believe that in the future working people and other adults will increasingly need to brush up their skills by undergoing further training and study. For this to happen, they will need to be able to make independent use of an educational system that enables anyone to study anywhere at any time.

As for age limits on employment, the former mandatory retirement age of 55 was set at a time when the average life expectancy was much shorter than it is now, and many companies have raised it to 60. However, we already live in an era where it is not unusual for people to live well beyond the age of 80, and it is quite probable that people can generally work up to the age of 70 or so. The gap between the mandatory retirement age and the average life expectancy will surely give rise to further anxiety concerning employment and pensions. There are, however, limits to the extent to which employment in the same company can be lengthened by extending the mandatory retirement age. In a multistream society, the provision of various types of work according to age is desirable for both employers and employees.

The issue of developing new job opportunities for older people will continue to grow in importance. Older people will always face the challenge posed by the extremely rapid progress of technology. We should not, however, underestimate their skills and experience. There are surely workplaces that can make really good use of them. We can envisage new job opportunities for older people that may not have such high remuneration but that provide a real sense of fulfillment in terms of a significant contribution to society. Nor should we forget participation in nonprofit organizations, time spent on personal interests, and, of course, the highly meaningful task of training one's successors.

Whenever the term *job* is mentioned, we tend to think in terms of working in a company environment. We must also turn our attention to businesses that individuals manage independently and give them the respect that they deserve, such as agriculture, forestry, and fisheries; self-employment; cottage industries; and venture businesses.

(3) Family and community—giving full rein to diversity while choosing relationships for oneself

Life based on the family unit dates back to the dawn of humanity. Living within a small unit that allows

people to maintain close relationships and help one another is one of the foundations of peace of mind. The underlying assumption is that the family consists of a legally married couple and their children living under the same roof, with the father having responsibility for providing income and the mother taking charge of child care and housework. Unfortunately, this pattern will not necessarily lead to a happy life in the twenty-first century. When we consider factors such as the advances made by women into society and marital freedom, it seems more realistic to take a less rigid view of the concept of the family.

Nevertheless, it is important to ensure that all children are brought up in an environment where they can receive ample love from adults and where everyone has friends who will help them. Individuals who decline to have children because they will take up too much time or cost too much to educate, and a society that demands births for the sake of its own vitality, especially to avoid a labor shortage, have one thing in common: They are looking at children in purely economic terms. Children pass on our culture, realize our dreams, and create the future. A society in which people refuse to have children because they do not believe in the society's future is an empty society indeed.

During the twentieth century, the world's population grew rapidly, so it is only natural that populations will stabilize in developed countries that are going through the transition to postindustrial societies. Consequently, society should place priority on creating conditions in which children are seen as a blessing and formulate policies to that end without placing too much emphasis on numbers. Parents should be able to engage in both child care and social activities so that their children can start life as people with a strong insight into the basics of human relationships. Among other things, both mothers and fathers should be able to concentrate on child care for a certain period before returning to work. Or, in cases where both parents want to work, they should be provided with ample child-care support. In recent years, there have been reports that more children are suffering from anxiety. It is vital to nurture healthy adults for the twenty-first century by enabling children to build firm relationships in the family, the community, and the school.

If existing family and community bonds are emphasized, there is a danger that the family and the community will not be able to fulfill new roles. We should think flexibly and create situations in which people can get by with one another's help, irrespective of the form that may take. Possible alternatives to traditional communities involve cooperative or collective houses, in which several families symbiotically create a new type of community, and virtual communities, whose members build stronger ties of friendship over the Internet than with their geographical neighbors. Society will thus become more experimental in the twenty-first century, and though there may be confusion, it is crucial to take up new challenges without losing sight of the value of human relationships.

Japanese society is characterized by not only homogeneity but also a strong desire for homogeneity. This was an advantage during the twentieth century, when there was a need to learn from the West, to modernize, and to raise living standards. It is also why many Japanese refer to their country as a nation of middle-class people. Now that living and other standards have reached a certain level, however, diversity is important for generating further vitality and discovering new ways of life. Discrimination based on race, place of origin, age, or gender is inexcusable, and guaranteeing the basic human rights of all people living in Japan is fundamental. The basic, essential rules for living referred to in the discussion of education naturally include this.

In the twenty-first century, because of the impact of the falling birthrate and the aging population, Japan must consider encouraging immigration. Japan has strong exchanges with other countries and has skillfully absorbed goods and information from overseas. It is, however, a different matter when it comes to people. Although many Japanese have traveled or lived overseas, they have little experience when it comes to dealing with people from other countries who settle here, take Japanese citizenship, and become permanent residents of Japan. Their acceptance mechanisms are inadequate, both institutionally and emotionally. There is, however, a global trend toward greater freedom of movement across borders. Many foreigners already live in Japan, and a considerable number have settled here for the long term. It is only natural to recognize such people as full-fledged members of society. In fact,

making the most of the strengths of people with different cultural backgrounds could well be a new source of vitality for Japan. Japanese society has always operated on the basis of unwritten rules, but it is now necessary to make it more contractual. The realistic approach is to eliminate the friction arising from cultural differences, in accordance with clearly stated rules.

(4) Social security (medical care, nursing care, and pensions)—ensuring a long, vigorous, and healthy life

The social security system acts as a safety net. In the twenty-first century, we must continue to manage it in a stable manner to provide the basis for the peace of mind that richly individual people need to give full rein to their strengths. Because general demographic trends are almost irreversible, twenty-five years from now Japan will inevitably be a society with an extremely low birthrate and an aging population.

Currently, health and nursing care for oneself or members of one's family, together with income security, are major sources of anxiety among middle-aged and elderly people. Anxiety is also spreading among younger people, who fear not only that it will be impossible to maintain the social security system in the future but also that their own burden will far exceed the benefits that they will eventually receive.

During Japan's rapid-growth era, companies effectively provided employees and their families with most social security. Corporate society is, however, fighting for survival. This development has led to the sudden collapse of long-term employment and other practices that used to be considered core elements of the so-called Japanese style of management. The system of seniority-based wages and promotions has also been undermined. Meanwhile, the "corporate life span" during which a company was expected to prosper has steadily shortened at the same time as the average life expectancy of the Japanese has lengthened. Japan's population is aging at the fastest rate ever experienced by any country in the world. As a result, pension and employment schemes premised on an average life expectancy of sixty to seventy years are completely out of touch with the needs of a long-lived society, greatly amplifying people's fears for the future. When people feel such strong anxiety about their future, it is difficult to dispel the sense of having reached an impasse that pervades society.

If we neglect appropriate systemic reforms, the vitality of Japanese society will be seriously eroded because the social security system will be shaken to the core by aging and longer life spans on one hand and an extremely low birthrate on the other. Reform of Japan's systems is a matter of the greatest urgency, if only because the above-mentioned demographic shifts are taking place more rapidly than in any other country.

We believe that principles and policies for social security in the twenty-first century should be considered with the above ideas as our basic premise. State and public institutions are responsible for guaranteeing the minimum necessary social security, and we must ensure that the people's trust is firm in that respect. If this trust should break down, social anxiety will become truly serious. On the premise that a social security minimum is guaranteed, we consider it desirable for individuals to be able to select additional social security independently from among diverse options. These options include not only systems directly associated with social security but also employment systems, vocational training systems, and the like. Social security is not something that can be considered in isolation. We emphasize that it is important to ensure a balance with various economic and social systems and practices. This being the case, we believe we should abandon our passive reliance on state and public institutions to provide a uniform peace of mind in the form of social security. Instead, individuals should make their own independent choices from among diverse options, and society should consolidate the systems supporting this.

People should not be treated uniformly either. Physical, mental, and social diversity is increasing even within the same age group. Social security is based on a philosophy of mutual support, whereby the entire community deals with the risks incurred by any member of the community. Thus everyone,

even members of the older generation, should be prepared to carry part of the burden on the support side. We must discard any fixed notions of the aging society as one in which a relatively small number of currently active people support the older generation. Instead, we need a system in which the members of the community are prepared to share the risks and burdens that can face anyone.

Medicine: Health is one of the most worrying problems facing an aging society with a falling birthrate. A society in which people live a long time is not necessarily cause for unreserved joy, because longevity accompanied by bad health is unfortunate both for the ailing person and for society as a whole. The question is how far we can close the gap between life expectancy and healthy life expectancy. If the two were the same, there would be no need for nursing care, and it would be possible to curb the burgeoning cost of nursing care and medical treatment and the excessive burden borne by the working population. We must therefore change our thinking, moving away from medicine that simply treats the sick and toward policies and systems of preventive and health-maintenance medicine. In this way, we can extend healthy life expectancy, bringing it closer to actual life expectancy.

In addition, as pointed out below in connection with nursing care and pensions, all the systems and practices involved are closely intertwined with numerous others. Over many years of steady economic growth, all these systems functioned in their own way, giving rise in time to rampant sectionalism. To extend healthy life expectancy in an era of longer life spans, we should try to establish systems that avoid ageist prejudice and enable older people to make a social commitment to work, volunteer activities, and so on for as long as they are healthy. If this can be done, it will enhance their sense of worth, enabling them to enjoy better physical health by maintaining mental health. This scenario, in turn, should help to reduce the cost of medical treatment and nursing care for the aged.

As one means of ensuring preventive and health-maintenance medicine, we propose that consulting teams consisting of doctors, public health nurses, nurses, counselors, pharmacists, and others be established so that people can consult them without hesitation about their daily health worries. We could call these institutions "neighborhood dispensaries." The existence of nearby facilities that allow consultations with easily approachable, trustworthy specialists will surely make it easier for people to manage their own health. For areas that are subject to substantial geographical constraints, we suggest consulting systems that use telephones and the Internet. We believe we should also study mechanisms whereby these teams can use the Internet to acquire necessary specialized knowledge by submitting inquiries online to medical specialists and medical institutions. These neighborhood dispensaries will not only lengthen healthy life expectancy but also ease crowding in hospitals and curb medical costs.

Per capita medical costs for older people are several times higher than those for currently active people. We have already discussed why it is necessary to ensure that systems are operated in a stable manner so that older people who are actually ill can receive medical treatment with peace of mind. The finances of the health insurance systems that underwrite these expenses are reportedly on the verge of collapse, however, so curbing the huge and rapidly expanding costs of medical treatment is an extremely important issue for Japan's low-birthrate, aging society. The existence of such problems as long-term hospitalization, overprescription of medications, and excessive use of medical tests has been pointed out for many years. But the mechanisms in place to curtail overprescription of medications, for example, are far from adequate, and there is a real danger of moral hazard. Large-scale consumption of pharmaceuticals provides profits not only for the companies that manufacture and distribute them but also for the medical institutions that are the primary users and earn drug-price margins. Meanwhile, the patients who are the end users are scarcely aware of the costs involved. Instead of questioning the ethics and awareness of those involved, however, we urgently need to solve the problems existing within the associated systems and mechanisms. Although it is necessary to ensure stability in the operation of the health insurance system so that older people who are actually ill can receive medical treatment with peace of mind, we believe greater emphasis on preventive medicine for extending healthy life expectancy will also help ensure this stability.

Yet another problem is the strong tendency to treat patients without informing them of what is being done and why, largely because of the high degree of specialization involved and the lopsided power balance between doctor and patient. The information in case records should be disclosed to patients and other relevant parties, and doctors should be made more accountable for their actions. There is also a need for mechanisms to provide objective evaluations of medical institutions. If neighborhood dispensaries are allowed to function as third parties that provide impartial advice, patients will be able to make choices that relate directly to their own lifestyles, such as selecting doctors and treatment methods.

Nursing care: Even if a mature society provides work opportunities for people with the necessary desire and skills, it still faces the important problems of how people who require nursing care can live and of how to share the burden of such nursing care across society. When it comes to establishing a system in which individuals can spend the final days of their lives where they and those closest to them prefer—be it at home, in a nursing home, or in a hospital—without losing their independence, the individuals and those closest to them should always play the leading role. Moreover, this approach should reduce social costs.

Under present conditions, it is impossible for families to provide nursing care on their own. Following the basic principle that society overall should share the burden of risk that everyone will require nursing care at some stage, we should create a framework to ensure that society as a whole shares the burden. We should ensure that the dignity of those who require nursing care is fully preserved at all times. Those who can pay for themselves should be allowed to do so, thus weakening the widely accepted notion that the government graciously bestows such services. At the same time, this approach will establish a framework that allows autonomous choice while preventing excessive supply and demand. It would not be appropriate to adopt a uniform approach to burden sharing. The system must reflect the individual's ability to shoulder the burden, the risks involved, and the level of benefits expected. Disclosing and providing information pertaining to the services offered is important from the point of view of guaranteeing independence of choice for people who require nursing care. It is also desirable in terms of promoting fair competition among the parties providing such services, enhancing the quality of services, and ensuring that services are tailored to actual needs. Moreover, to guarantee that people who take care of others are suitably valued by society as a whole, it is necessary to ensure that nursing-care services are appropriately compensated.

Pensions: Pensions are a matter of the utmost concern to older people. Nevertheless, the debate concerning reform of the pension system has not been taken very seriously, and there is a danger that the system will be meddled with too much. Systems of this type must be sustained over a long period if they are to convey peace of mind. To establish stable, lasting pension schemes, it is not enough to debate the financial aspects alone. Such schemes must be considered as part of a larger picture that includes the mandatory retirement age system, promotion of employment among older people, medical treatment, nursing care, and other elements of the overall social security system, as well as policies to stimulate the economy in general. There is a need to eliminate the harmful effects of vertically segmented administrative systems that treat the employment, medical treatment, and nursing care systems as "givens" and draw up reform plans based only on the "logic of pensions." For example, if the pensionable age is simply raised without any reference to providing a better employment environment for older people, it will only amplify the anxieties of middle-aged and older people, who are already concerned about their old age, and encourage them to save still more to protect their livelihoods.

Pension systems should be constructed with a clear view of what will happen over the next several decades. Unless this is done, it will be necessary to make frequent changes and corrections to the system, and in the process unnecessarily exacerbate the anxieties that people already feel.

From the point of view of emphasizing life stages, it is important that individuals plan their own lives

based on their own choices after they have formulated an overall picture of what they want to do with their lives. For the postindustrial society of the future, preparing a variety of pension options that will make this possible is fundamental. We do not believe it is appropriate to expect younger people to support all aspects of older people's lives. What is required instead is a mechanism to support the concept that people decide, picking from among a wide selection of options, to make contributions during a certain stage of life and receive the benefits at a later stage, that is, during old age.

To ensure that people can choose independently and with reassurance, the system must be structured so that a minimum basic pension can be fixed on the basis of compulsory participation. Ensuring minimum social security in this way will offer people minimum but universal peace of mind about life in old age. Offering a variety of options over and above this will ensure a greater sense of abundance and peace of mind.

The minimum pensions to be paid will depend on the various schemes and social conditions, including the mandatory retirement age and other elements of the employment system. There are also other important determinants, such as the living expenses of older people and libraries, parks, and other elements of social infrastructure that older people can use.

It has been pointed out that Japan's social security system consists of vested interests that emphasize the provision of pensions and medical treatment, whereas it lags in certain areas of social welfare, such as nursing care and child care. In drawing up an integrated policy for social security that takes a comprehensive view of pensions, medical treatment and welfare, we should look for services that people can pay for and that can be administered in a stable manner. When doing so, we must be well aware that the Japanese people will find it hard to bear the burden if we preserve these vested interests and retain existing methods premised simply on redistribution of a larger pie. Indeed, this could make it impossible to administer the system in a stable manner.

When it comes to social security, values and interests vary according to whether one belongs to a particular group, generation, organization, region, and so on, and there is inherent potential for serious clashes of opinion. For this reason, we believe careful studies by experts are required. In addition, the various strata and generations that make up the Japanese people, particularly the younger generation, should participate in a thorough national debate and make their own choices and decisions. In the hope of such an active national debate, we urge politicians and bureaucrats to create an environment that encourages discussion. They should make information available, articulate the relationship between costs and benefits, and present policy options in an easily understood manner.

(5) Cultural and artistic activities—expressing the urge for new paths

Cultural and artistic activities are a fundamental part of life in that they help us highlight the absurdities inherent in any situation that engenders anxiety and overcome anxiety by expressing the urge for new paths. Moreover, no matter what sort of world we live in, it is important that truth, goodness, and beauty exist in our lives. When we are always pressed for time, we gradually lose the ability to appreciate things of beauty. Surely a great many people feel this.

A society that gives priority to economic activities views scholarly, cultural, and artistic activities as something to engage in when people have time and money to spare. In a recession, both the public and the private sectors tend to cut spending in these areas. We strongly advocate expanded tax exemptions on donations by individuals and corporations as a means of supporting scholarship, culture, and the arts. Such exemptions not only encourage donations toward scholarship, culture, and the arts and support more sophisticated and vigorous activities in these areas but are also significant for two important reasons. First, they demonstrate that society sees such activities as worthwhile, desirable, and worth encouraging. Second, they represent a break from the tendency for the authorities to take the initiative in all such activities, which has prevailed since the Meiji era. Instead, they demonstrate a change in attitudes toward the view that it is desirable for individuals to support culture and the arts as a means of reflecting their independent wishes. There is little doubt that active support for cultural and

artistic activities will enhance individual autonomy and help stimulate other social activities.

2. Information, science, and technology as supports for a life-stage society and a society of dispersed, cooperative networks

(1) Information—toward a new community through sharing and communication

Everyone recognizes that the computer- and network-based information society has arrived. The personal computer is the symbol of the information society, and the ability to use it is often a condition for employment, much to the concern of the middle aged and elderly. In light of this situation, we wish to reaffirm that the information society is one in which anyone should be able to access its huge amount of data and apply data as meaningful information. Once we take this view, we can start to look forward in the twenty-first century to the spread of specialized communication machines that are as easy to use as a telephone, requiring no manuals. These machines will serve as terminals that connect all appliances and tools in a network. Once these machines exist, we envisage the advent of an information society that frees people from the problems raised by complicated machines, allowing them to play the leading role. Instead of taking excessive time and trouble to learn how to handle such machines, people will live in an environment in which they can apply abundant sources of information usefully.

It is especially important to develop computer software to support this scenario. Already, there are moves to build computer systems based on open architectures such as Linux. These universal systems use software that is provided free. In return, the software providers earn the respect and gratitude of their many, many users. Likewise, the ability to make contact with many others and the gratitude shown in return are already motivating people to provide useful information over networks. This is an excellent example of how technology can support the formation of people-driven communities. Networks make it possible to create virtual communities that transcend geographic communities, paving the way for the construction of a society of dispersed, cooperative networks.

By extension, if it becomes possible to obtain medical and welfare-related information, if personal medical data are available from information terminals, and if the aforementioned neighborhood dispensaries are connected, older people will surely feel greater peace of mind. All this will provide a powerful underpinning for a society whose objective is to enable people to live with peace of mind in every life stage.

At the same time, we must not forget that a society that relies on computers so much is exposed to the dangers inherent in occasional breakdowns, malfunctions, and abuse. We would like to think that there would be little abuse in a society founded on systems paid for with the currency of respect and gratitude, but it is essential to ensure that these systems are secure. Furthermore, computers that can process vast amounts of information and transmit it at high speeds are extremely useful tools, but in situations where values are distorted these tools can be misused to control society. To ensure that people holding diverse views can use shared information effectively, members of society must be encouraged to become autonomous through education.

(2) Science and technology—restoring the balance among nature, people, and artifacts

Japan aspires to be a nation based on science and technology. We believe that in the twenty-first century Japan will continue the work begun in the twentieth century and develop science and technology further as it seeks greater comfort in life. As already mentioned, however, there are doubts as to whether science and technology should maintain their present course of development, which aims to support more affluent and convenient lifestyles. This reservation exists because twentieth-century science and technology sought efficiency and have virtually reached their limits in this respect.

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Environmental problems are serious, and we must remember that resources and energy are finite. It is time we reconsidered existing policies, which aim exclusively at efficiency and quantitative expansion. We need to review the relationship among nature, people, and artifacts, and pursue scientific and technological development that focuses on the most desirable way of life for people as an integral part of nature. Both nature and human beings as part of nature are now protesting at the fraught lives we live. What we need now is lifeist values and a society that values existence, daily life, and lifelong fulfillment.

Our first task is to create a "cyclical society" that makes the most of nature. As our first model, we propose a serious review of agriculture. Although agriculture is fundamentally cyclical, it was industrialized in the search for efficiency. Productivity is important in agriculture, of course, but because we forgot that we were dealing with nature, land fertility diminished, crops lost their diversity, and problems began to arise in the areas of food safety and farmers' health. In Japan, in particular, the decision that it was more economical to import foods led to substantial dependence on external sources for most foods other than rice. As a result, Japan now has the lowest self-sufficiency ratio in the world.

Establishing a cyclical, organic agriculture and becoming self-sufficient in safe, tasty, highly nutritious foods should provide a basis for peace of mind. Moreover, this style of agriculture should help protect the immediate natural environment and preserve the natural resources with which children should come into contact. With this kind of agriculture, it will, of course, be necessary to develop and make active use of advanced technologies, using biotechnology to improve plant and animal strains and computers to manage crops and facilitate operations. It is also important to put farms on a corporate basis and rationalize their management. Attempts to put agriculture on such a footing should help establish a set of values predicated on making society as a whole cyclical, create a methodology for doing so, and provide opportunities for science and technology in general to change.

As our second model, we propose the automobile industry, which in many respects constitutes the foundation on which Japan's industry was built. To make this industry cyclical, it would be necessary to incorporate the principle of recycling right from the assembly stage of the production process so that automobiles could be easily recycled at the end of their useful lives. In fact, this has already started but has not gone far enough from the point of view of lifeist values. We believe it is essential to make everything concerned with automobiles, including the way they are used for transporting people and goods, more energy and resource efficient. We should even reconsider the automobile as a technology for transporting people and goods in a convenient and comfortable manner. In the twenty-first century, it will be necessary to go beyond the automobile and think in terms of a comprehensive system for traffic and transportation that supports a cyclical society.

The development of "life-stage technologies" is also important. These technologies address the entire life span. Medicine, in particular, should be approached from this point of view. When we think in terms of medicine that addresses everything from medical treatment to preventive medicine and health maintenance, it is clearly necessary to build a health-care system that provides peace of mind from the cradle to the grave.

Within life-stage technologies, technologies for systems and institutions, known as social technologies, are also important. Waste and water are good examples. In the case of water, roads should be made absorbent and rainwater should be used in applications that require nonpotable water. Meanwhile, household wastewater should be purified as close as possible to the home and allowed to run off into nearby rivers. Large-scale sewerage systems are a thing of the past.

The essential point is that the purpose of technological development is not to change lifestyles through the application of technology. Rather, lifestyles are the primary factor, and peace of mind lies in developing technologies for the types of lifestyles that we want. People with a pioneer spirit will spearhead this sort of technological development, and we hope that specialists too will be imbued with this attitude.

VI. Conclusion

We based our discussion of establishing a society in which everyone can have dreams, trust one other, and live with peace of mind and plenitude on how individuals want to live. The individual is the starting point and must be autonomous and spontaneous, that is, a person who always acts of his or her own volition and is tolerant and cooperative in his or her relationships with others.

Such people create a life-stage society that values existence, daily life, and lifelong fulfillment and a society of dispersed, cooperative networks in which the individual is the primary actor.

Peace of mind and plenitude are found in autonomous people not only living full lives but also thinking deeply about how their descendants can live even better lives and taking up the challenges that this mind-set implies.