

# The Future: Is There a 'There' There?

Book Review by Ed Levy

This is an ambitious book, giving serious consideration to most of the interconnected issues relating not only to America's, but to the world's future, and offering specific, detailed, thoughtful solutions to these complex problems. But there is no hubris here, since Daleiden credits all his sources; indeed, there are over 1500 end-notes. Thus, despite impressive evidence given, copious citations and generally strong reasoning, it would seem virtually impossible for anyone (including me) to agree totally with everything Daleiden recommends; and the very comprehensiveness and necessary length of the book may discourage some readers. Therefore, although the reasoning is lucid and the writing clear enough to be a straight, continuous read, the book may be most useful as a source-reference book, because of its comprehensiveness and clarity. It is, then, an important book, one to own.

It is also a courageous book. Since it clearly makes no sense to identify problems (and offer solutions) if the causes are not explored and exposed, Daleiden openly identifies various problem-causers, e.g., the Pope and the Catholic Church (although other religious leaders who turn away from the ethical necessity of guarding our long-term future should also be castigated), national and trans-national businesses, the apathetic and innumerate American voters and consumers (the consumption-inducing advertising industry and growth-mad economists

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must take much blame), both of our major political parties, the IMF, the World Bank, the CIA, etc. And since there is plenty of guilt to go around, particularly among such well-chosen perpetrators, Daleiden's proposed reasonable solutions would tread on many toes.

This is an idealistic book, the third of a trilogy, with its two predecessors, *The Final Superstition* and *The Science of Morality*, summarized in an appendix. "The greatest good for the greatest number" as a criterion for assessing a society's success is intelligently modified by showing that larger numbers inevitably limit the amount

of "good" that only a small number of us would have access to. And Daleiden just misses making explicit that the classification of "the pursuit of happiness" and its two necessary pre-conditions, life and liberty, as "unalienable rights" is normative, not descriptive, so that any government that denies its citizens these rights is sinning against the Creator. Believers

in the immutable baseness of "human nature" and beneficiaries of current environmentally unsound policies will allege that the proposed solutions are unrealistic and impossible to implement. Yet, Daleiden clearly shows that, as "impossible" as some partisans would want them to seem, the modes of action, solutions, policies that Daleiden proffers *must* be implemented if our civilization and humankind are to survive with some degree of dignity intact. The questions, then, are not whether, but how to carry out recommendations similar to those which Daleiden makes — not how much doing such things will cost, but what it will cost *not* to do them.

Thus, this is also a sensible, rational, practical book, presenting plentiful evidence and developing and defending arguments in support of the recommendations made.

The chapter headings alone demonstrate how daunting a task Daleiden tackled and how comprehensive the text is. Separate but inter-related chapters deal with

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by Joseph L. Daleiden  
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population, economics, immigration, growth, trade, poverty, education, crime, health care, taxation, ethics, defense spending, unemployment and inflation, and the plight of the less-developed countries. In each case, problems and logical fallacies are discussed and solutions are presented. This review will deal mostly with issues related to population size and immigration; and instead of waiting until the end, will comment here on what may be flaws that affect only slightly the overall high quality of the book.

Simply put, Daleiden is too nice, and thus occasionally inconsistent. I do not understand why he would lessen the impact of his own data and logic by acceding to “political correctness.” For example, the first chapter presents two alternative “State of the Union” addresses that, depending on what happens between now and then, could be made by a U.S. president in 2050. One address decries that, because Congress lacked courage and foresight in the 1990s, the U.S. population had reached 500 million and was still growing, necessitating measures that would make Draco look mild. The other address celebrates the fact that the country had a population of “only” 350 million in 2040 and was steadily declining slightly each year due to measures passed by an enlightened Congress in the 1990s, so that no changes in policy needed to be made in 2050.

The question then is: would Daleiden be content if U.S. population reaches 350 million in forty years, knowing that a population of 400-500 million would be “environmentally devastating,” that the sustainable carrying capacity of the U.S. is close to 150 million and that 350 million is much closer to 400 million than to 150 million? Since our current population of 275 million already does so much environmental harm, what a population continually growing more numerous over the next forty years would do to our water supply, our forests, our land, our social, cultural and political institutions hardly bears imagining. Will we suddenly start to conserve? Will the continuous influx of immigrants, even as small a number as the 250,000 Daleiden suggests, adopt the conservation-preservation ethic or American over-consumption as their life style? Daleiden should have faith in his own data and his own recommendation that the “ideal population trend would be a flat or slightly declining level in population” and recommend that this trend start now.

Suggesting a “slower” rate of population growth or

a “lower level of immigration” may be a “realistic” way to speak to benighted Congresspersons, but it is unrealistic to believe that this continued growth will do anything but irreversible harm. Now, if this chapter had occurred later in the book, after the evidence had been presented, we might accept the idea that a U.S. population of 350 million would be the best that we could realistically hope for — given Congress’s level of competence and accountability; but appearing early, it

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seems to be offered as a desirable goal to be energetically worked for — and it is not. Taking Daleiden’s data seriously (as we should) leads to the conclusion that *now* is when our population should start decreasing, and that means a virtual cessation of immigration — now. “Modest gains in the standard of living for all Americans” is simply not “sustainable” since we already consume far too much, and adding more people simply increases the unsustainability. Lifting up our poor is not possible if we continually import more and still more poor. Forty years is too long to wait.

One other question: why should Americans lower their fertility rate to less than the 2.1 replacement level in order to accommodate immigrants? Why and to whom would this be fair?

Another example of inconsistency: how can our current Members of Congress be considered “neither corrupt nor even inept” and their actions seen as “merely reflecting what the majority of their constituents want” when they do “not know much about demography or economics in today’s world, respond to lobbyists and big donors rather than to the large majority of America’s citizens, deliberately and consistently disregard what every poll for the last two decades has shown: that most

Americans want less, even substantially less immigration, flagrantly ignore easily available data, ever-present even in our newspapers, about American citizens having to deal with stagnant or declining buying power, a shrinking middle class, a steadily deteriorating environment, increased “natural” disasters, urban and suburban sprawl, failing educational systems, still too-high crime rates, a booming drug market, etc. Do all these things show honesty and aptitude? Daleiden points out that “spineless presidents and Congresspeople” valued their own political futures more than the future of America, and that “as we become more populous” Congress members become ever more inaccessible (except to big donors) so that “the ideal of a nation of the people, by the people, and for the people recedes.” Would a competent and honest Congress allow immigration-driven population growth to destroy this ideal? And why don't we all realize that any immigration that causes our population to grow even a little, or even to stay at its present size rather than begin to decline immediately, works against the “sustainability” of our society?

If Daleiden is willing to criticize the Pope and the Catholic Church, why does he shy away from criticizing Congress?

Daleiden's reasonable niceness leads to some arguments taking on an apologetic tone. For example, the politically correct acknowledgment that immigrants “are making a major contribution to our society” seems to support claims that immigration's “benefits” (e.g., “revitalizing” neighborhoods, establishing businesses and “creating” jobs, adding more consumers, like car and house buyers) outweigh its harm (on the environment, our culture, the bifurcation of our society into rich and poor, our representative form of government, increasing recognition of ethnicity and the divisiveness it causes). Rather than blunt the message about the costs of immigration, it would have been better not to have begun with a bow in their direction, and still better to have credited specific individual immigrants (e.g., Hideki Irabu or Mario Obledo) with having remarkable and unique skills that have contributed importantly to our well-being, so that these few are the exceptional individuals whom we desperately need.

More important is the politically *incorrect* position of egregiously conflating intelligence and education. All academics know colleagues (and students) who are stupid (i.e., unable to perceive relationships) and

uneducated people who have understanding, even wisdom. The key argument is not the statistical description of what is (or seems to be), but the possibility of what *could be*, given proper opportunities. Too many poor people have babies; and neither they nor their parents have or have had choices. If we don't believe that, we cannot maintain that we should train our own unemployed or underemployed citizens; for if these citizens, who have never been allowed to play on a “level

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playing field,” are indeed unemployable because they congenitally lack “cognitive skills,” then we cannot train them because they are untrainable. Then, if we cannot find citizens who can or could do the work required, we *must* import and hire immigrants. Thus, Daleiden's acceptance of this statistical “evidence” is a positive defense of the need for immigrants. Importing immigrants and neglecting our own citizens who are perceived as too lacking in “cognitive skills” to be trainable would be the real way to guarantee a perpetual underclass of uneducable “losers.” This is the defense of having coolies: if we can neglect a group or class of people long enough, we can build a belief system and statistical “evidence” that convinces us — and convinces them — that they are in an underclass because they are indeed inferior, were born and are meant to remain inferior. Well, *Brave New World*, here we are again.

More troublesome is the persistent use of the word “sustainable,” with Daleiden's definition of it coming late in the book, so that the term can be — is being — abused. That is, if our population is already too large, if we already consume too much, if we already do too much environmental harm, then we need to implement negative population growth as soon as possible. Thus, “growth,” as it is commonly understood, cannot be “sustainable” if our society and environment are to be sustained. And certainly, immigration cannot be

“sustainable.” While people are scuffling for a living, as almost all immigrants are, they don't care about mutated frogs or the effects of deforestation. Rather, they are eager to adopt the over-consumptive American life-style where waste is a sign of wealth and well-being. Only as they or their children become acculturated can that awareness and care begin.

Moving to a more positive vein, what I perceive as flaws are more than balanced by the book's basic and overall soundness. Examples abound.

First, Daleiden's discussions of population and immigration are, but for the exceptions taken above, excellent. And his recommendations for reducing immigration are well thought out — indeed, if they were followed we might still have a future.

Second, he even-handedly tries not to blame all our difficulties on immigration. Depressed wages, a smaller middle class, foreign investment, extraordinary expenditures on defense, excessive litigation, the rise of competition in the rest of the world, the problems associated with ghettos, “helping” less developed countries with military aid instead of with agricultural technology and family planning advice (I would add building schools and hospitals and the granting of micro-loans to individuals rather than corrupt governments, all of which would reduce the “push” factor) are all problems that immigration and population growth contribute to but are not the sole cause.

Third, Daleiden's sane rebuttals of accepted “truths” include pointing out that “wanting more children because Mama had many” is not a biological need; that exporting jobs while importing people may be what cheap-labor advocates and investors want, but not American workers, environmentalists or those who want to preserve American culture and political practices; that the use of the GDP as a measure of our well-being makes no sense, since funding our penal system or reconstruction after “natural” disasters whose effects are made worse by human activities also boost the GDP; so-called “studies” by such think tanks as the Urban Institute are invalid because they make their “data” support what they want to find by over-estimating wages immigrants are likely to earn and under-estimating the payments to support governmental operations that immigrants will make.

Daleiden's basic message, then, is that today's acts

are destroying tomorrow, that we are stealing, not just borrowing, from the future and that we must accept the possibility of disasters if we are to prevent them. The strengths of the book are impossible to list completely, but the sheer variety of examples is notable: population-induced miseries; the hypocrisy of being proud of the work one's parents did (to allow their children to avoid this work) while also believing that doing that same work would be demeaning to themselves; the need to be prudent about global warming even if we are not yet convinced about its presence; the consequences of living in or moving to places that cannot sustain life, e.g., the Ganges River delta, deserts, flood plains, earthquake and landslide zones, barrier islands, so that we are seeing an exponential rise in environmental damage throughout the world.

An additional value of the book is the validity of its arguments: e.g., the deft debunking of the “demographic transition” theory (with the addition that even if it were true, it would be too late, because of doubling time, to matter by the time it kicked in); the damage we do to less-developed countries (and to our own citizens who deserve opportunities) by pirating away their talented and trained people at the same time that we bring in their uneducated to compete with our citizens who are left untrained; the demonstration that what was (or may have been) true, e.g., that America can take in more people with ease or that immigration was not a problem in the 19th century, is now no longer true, so that we have to re-think our policies; and that a solely economic model, one that disregards environmental concerns, is harmful.

For those of us who are concerned about and are willing to take responsibility for the future, however, Daleiden's proposed solutions, culled from a vast array of rich sources — economists, philosophers, ecologists, etc. — are well worth implementing wherever possible. And the fact that all this copious material is collected in one place is extremely valuable. Most important of all, for me, and I wish he had emphasized this more, is his argument that “radical reforms,” even a moratorium on immigration, must be sought now. The book is an information “mall” and more. We should all see more deeply the ramifications and implications of the issues Daleiden discusses and with the ideas he presents. And we should act now.

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