rather than deny or avoid it. Some decisions are going to be arbitrary and
epistemically random no matter what we do, no matter how hard we try to base them
on reasons."

Section III, from a personal standpoint, proved to be the high point of the book. It deals with the problem that the judiciary has in deciding custody between parents in divorce cases. The whole issue is complicated not only by the conflicting interests of the parents and the child/children but by the fact that delaying the decision inevitably favours the parent already in possession and makes it more and more dif-
ficult to come to a decision on the basis of what would have been best for the child
at the moment of breakdown of the marriage. In such situations there is the danger
of rewarding a parent by granting custody on the grounds that this may now be what
is best for the child, when they may have gained initial care of the child by an illegal
or immoral act. Elster explores the arguments for and against the use of randomization
to help in the decision process associated with this emotive area.

In the final section (Section IV) Elster looks at the area of social choice, in par-
ticular the area of politics. He concentrates his examination upon the fields of social
engineering and economic planning to determine whether randomization might
produce a better quality of decision than that pertaining at the moment. It provides
some very interesting suggestions and is certainly worth a read.

The book in general will be of considerable interest to professionals and students
in this specialist area of philosophy/sociology. In addition those involved in social
work, politics and legal proceedings may find the alternatives proposed quite
intriguing.

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Michael A. Goldberg, *On Systemic Balance: Flexibility and Stability in Social, Economic, and
(cloth).

The new science of chaos has been enhanced by another significant contribution:
Michael Goldberg's book enables the concepts of balancing instability in complex
systems to be used in socioecological studies. These concepts received their prior
development mainly in the realm of the natural sciences. Narration in this book is
organized around the basic question of "What has been going wrong here with our
cities, our societies, and our global economic, political, and physical environments?"
(p. xiv). In fact, Goldberg provides an answer right from the start: any large scale pro-
ject has unexpected consequences as a result of unknowns, uncertainty, and instability
in the chaotic dynamics of complex environments. Furthermore, he offers a rather
paradoxical method of resolving some of the most urgent of the world's problems
based on the same essential features of the systems in question. These features had
earlier been regarded as destructive "side effects" and "backlashes."

The arguments are arranged into two parts. Part I, "Some Concepts and
Issues," provides several abstractions related to system dynamics with examples from
population biology, economics, and Oriental philosophy. Comprised of four chapters,
this part emphasizes a need for holism in decision-making; a need for stability based

on flexibility rather than efficiency (as has been the usual criterion); a persistence representative of a system's ability to respond to uncertainty by hierarchical and flexible series of responses; and the importance of the non-Western path of cautious adaptation to nature's versatility through appropriate cultural traditions.

Part 2, "Toward an Expanded Framework for Decision-Making," suggests alternative ways of societal design for developing and developed nations—the 'top down' approach, but also emphasises the value of 'bottom up' modification of the behavior of individuals. As in the Preamble of Part I, it examines ways to accommodate the requirements both of citizens and the stability of the natural world. The key notion is that of the title of E.F. Schumacher's book, Small is Beautiful, although Goldberg argues instead that 'just small and slow is always the answer' (p. 78). Nevertheless, this is a core idea, and all arguments presented in this book tended to prove such an approach. He discusses widely the cornerstones of the Chinese traditional philosophy of yin and yang: their perpetual unity through dualistic transformation into each other, thus creating changeability, multiplicity, and balancing diversity in the Universe. He shows how this millennia-old way of thinking is reflected in the contemporary life style and decision making of traditional non-Western societies.

Goldberg argues that slow and small change is a wise strategy of existence in our complex world where "the only certainty is the prevalence of the unknown and unknowable" (p. 47). He adds that "uncertainty, therefore, holds the key to successful future decision process" (p. 74), and is characterized by its adaptive and flexible behavior, such as slow change on a small scale; acknowledgement of uncertainty; keeping the options open; seeking diversity and maintaining complexity; placing greater value on persistence, and so on. In contrast, the current Western approach strives for certainty on as large a scale as possible, leading to a tyranny of technological 'great' decisions. On the other hand, traditions of democratic decision making that involve pluralism, public scrutiny, and social tolerance also furnish a means of avoiding the destructiveness of shock-causing uniformity and instability in an ideology of rapid development. Goldberg argues that "we need to move away from large-scale efficiency-based decisions to more decentralized, numerous, and smaller-scale undertakings. Despite the potential magnitude of these changes, they should be approached in a gradual and evolutionary way" (p. 110), a conclusion which is to be applauded.

But the measured progress toward promulgation of "self-sufficient local economies" as a formula for sustainable development can hardly be supported. "Traditional society" seems to be a frozen culture and must, according to the author, either remain so or evolve slowly. But in the modern world of yawning gaps between nations, to move slowly means for LDCs to descend backward into poverty. Hence, such a suggestion is nothing more than an expression of selfishness representing the view from within a wealthy nation. It is hard to accept that "local economies" will be sufficient for underdeveloped countries, which, in fact, tend to suffer from economic imbalance and other problems that threaten to tear them apart. However, the book serves as a warning for individuals of developing nations against the temptation to achieve material wealth by fast gigantic leaps instead of a process of steady natural evolution toward self-sufficiency in which "innovation [is] made part of the fabric of local cultures" (p. 91). Moreover, the ongoing global collapse of communism, a political system which sought rapid, all-embracing economic achievements through means of a narrow-minded and unstable ideology, enhances the sphere of application of the ideas contained in this book and raises its value as an indicator of the way forward. Unfortunately, however, the author has not succeeded in finding a