

by **Joel E. Cohen**

a global garden *in the* 21st century?

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Awe and Choice

Perhaps I am dreaming when I speculate that geophysical and biological surprises, the revaluation of living nature, our greater dependence on people all over the world, our growing determination to act lawfully and our own aging (individually and as a population) will increasingly inspire in many of us a greater awe for the world, for others and for ourselves.

The immense uncertainty of the future is the arena of human choice. A task for universities and their graduates is to provide the facts, theories and people needed to achieve a prosperous, wired, well tended, and beautiful global garden a century from now — a prospect, as Matthew Arnold put it, “which seems to lie before us like a land of dreams, so various, so beautiful, so new.”

Universities and the thoughtful people they produce can help societies to understand populations, economies, environments and cultures; to balance the goals of efficiency and equity; to improve the accounting of social well-being, of materials and of the consequences of actions; and to illuminate the benefits that the well-off derive from helping the poor live better lives. When universities and their graduates seek imaginative new ways to address the natural constraints and the human choices that we, our children and their children will face in the 21st century, there is hope.

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