

Parallel Culture

Expressions of caring and practices of sharing and cooperation are all around us.

By affirming that we want to live a cooperative lifestyle and acting on that desire, we can make our positive values the primary characteristic of our chosen culture. The often competitive, alienating or disempowering nature of the dominate culture provides the raw material from which we may fashion a **parallel culture** according to the positive and nurturing values that we respect, yet which we are often prevented from expressing in more than a small part of our lives. Through art, education and daily life, we can awaken in ourselves and others the ideal and goal of living positive values, and through our mutual understandings and consent, build a parallel culture of joy, peace and plenty.

A Parallel Culture Project would be a social network intending to build through cultural traditions, economic systems and governmental processes the philosophy of rational altruism and the values of

material spirituality. Living the values of **material spirituality** affirms a personal responsibility for self, society and nature, by finding a balance between our



Material Spirituality

Balancing our material needs & wants with our spiritual ideals.

material needs and wants and our spiritual ideals, such that the two support the practice of rational altruism. Choosing a lifestyle of **rational altruism** involves the affirmation of the intent to work for personal growth, social justice and ecological responsibility through systems and structures of sharing and of group empowerment. Such a lifestyle involves practicing caring, sharing and cooperation, through the processes of consensus decision-making, the building of intentional

community, neighborhood cooperation, worker or community-owned businesses, cooperatives, shared real estate equity, time-based economics, and other community-oriented programs.

Aspects of a culture expressing the philosophy of rational altruism & the values of material spirituality include:

Consensus Process - A method of group decision-making which encourages each person to work toward the good of all, through facilitated discussion and by either agreeing or standing aside from an agreement, the latter option involving the statement of reservations without preventing group action. Blocking agreement obligates one to continue to work toward acceptable compromise or alternatives.

Intentional Community - A fellowship of individuals and families practicing common agreement & collective action. Members share common residential property: cohousing, some community land trusts, collective houses, polyamorous community and communal society.

Real Estate Equity Sharing - May be practiced on two levels: First, all resident's housing payments go into personal equity accounts rather than rent to a landlord. May include socially responsible investing involving loans or investment from nonresidents. Second is site-value taxation, where land value is taxed higher than the improvements upon it. This assures that unearned income resulting from natural resources, population concentrations and governmental services is shared by all of society, while preserving earned income by lowering or abolishing the income tax, sales tax, value-added tax, etc.

Neighborhood Cooperation - Includes sharing programs such as: community gardens, community-supported agriculture, neighborhood watch, block parties, home-schooling, consumer cooperatives (of many kinds), alternative dispute resolution (volunteers providing services in mediation, arbitration, conciliation, facilitation and negotiation), community-oriented primary care (neighborhood-based primary medical care, preventive health care, mental health services), local currencies or labor exchange systems.

Worker or Community-Owned Businesses - Work-place democracy and worker ownership involves all workers in a business being empowered and having an ownership stake in the business. These range from minimal participation as in quality circles and employee stock ownership plans to complete participation as in community-owned businesses where everyone receives equal compensation through communal structures.

Time-Based Economics - Any form of labor or service credit system where labor is not valued in dollars, only recorded in hours. "Service credits" or "time dollars" are exchanged hour-for-hour, while "labor credits" involve a "labor quota" or minimum contribution of time (usually including a community-owned business) to maintain one's membership. Unlike local currencies valuing labor credits in dollars, the IRS has ruled that time-based economies are not commercial exchanges and therefore are not taxable.