

Techno-optimism does not breed an Ecological Paradigm

Jane Crayton
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Although attitudes may be shifting toward an ecological paradigm according to Dunlap, we are still losing species and habitat, possibly facing global degradation because the techno-optimist tend to believe that technology will save the human race.

Since Dwight D. Eisenhower signed the National Aeronautics and Space Act of 1958, the US economy has grown quite significantly stimulating our national wealth and stability. Our drive for innovation has catalyzed the technological revolution, providing a higher standard of living, allowing the 'American Dream' to be realized.

"Investing in the right scientists and the right technologies can improve the human condition quite dramatically." According to Bill Gates as he speaks to motivate the Indonesian people during a Presidential Inauguration speech in 2008. However we need to question his motivations, because they clearly could be financially driven, as his company Microsoft stands to earn billions of dollars during a technological revolution of a 3rd world country as it morphs into a technocratic society.

In contrast, the American patent applications lead is slipping, as international competition rises, according to a government report on in 2008 called Rising Above the Gathering Storm. What is driving all these patent applications internationally? In the report, researches noted: "One study reported that 73% of applicants for US patents said that publicly funded research formed part or all of the foundation for their innovations.¹¹ Much of the nation's research in engineering and the physical sciences is performed in federal laboratories, part of whose mission is to assist the commercialization of new technology."

Commercialization of new technology, has become key to propelling the techno-optimistic dream of techno-consumerism. However, attitudes still exist today promoting a US technocratic society. Success is seen through the eyes of the Apollo program, a time when science and technology improved our human condition; we defeated our economic depression of the 30's with technology. The American rise in technocratic affluence, ultimately impacted our environmental attitudes, which have suffered as inhabitants moved from rural homesteads to urbanized cities and mass produced agricultural methods.

Technocratic society allows you to become a specialist, allows you to focus on a repetitive task. The perceived reward is that technology will ultimately provide you more free time, allowing you to work less. However these new methods are often times contributors to unintentional negative impacts that may ultimately endanger our species and our habitat.

Quite possibly a lack of early child hood connection to nature could be responsible for a lack of ethical concern over human impacts on the environment. In the past, people were more connected to nature, because they were required to live from it, as most of the population lived rurally 100 years ago. Today children grow up never interacting with the food they eat, unaware of the process it takes to get to the dinner table. In fact most children are consuming mass produced corn products, as they sit stunned by flickering screens, downloading mega bytes, and cyber connections.

Although Dunlap and others argue about weather some shifting towards an ecological paradigm exists today, the inundation of technology still consumes our time, and detracts from our true connection with nature. More and more people are moving to

the cities, and less people per capita are responsible for feeding the masses using agricultural technology.

With technology saturation, and a move to urbanization it is clear, that we have been moving away from an ecological paradigm for the past several centuries. In order to accurately develop a model of environmental attitudes, we need to look at the entire time scale to see the trends clearly. Dunlap's Ecological survey does not address attitudes that existed 500 years ago, let alone 100 years ago. This will skew the data, and the trend line for attitudes could appear to be moving toward an ecological paradigm, however when looking at a larger chunk of time, the trend could be quite the opposite. The last 50 – 100 years is not sufficient, since this time only starts to encompass the technocratic trend.

Similar to a circuit pushing to many watts, the overload cause that circuit to break. Technology has saturated our lives and consumed our time, not saved us time, as we were sold on the idea generations ago. Our free time now is spent maintaining our networks of technology, and the extra time you have, is spent working more, so you can buy more. So how did we get so distracted from technology saving us, to technology selling us out?

Its important to work within the natural limits of inventive behavior, and not push the technocratic social agenda, as this leads to manufacture technology and negative impacts on the environment, and human survival. Inventive behavior and technologies could benefit human and environmental living conditions, however consumer attitudes, free market enterprise and industrialization have driven the negative effects of technology to be dumped, burned and polluted; pushing our sustainable threshold beyond capacity. Technology has not saved us, and there is no guarantee that technology will help humans face global climate change. But, humans need something to believe in, and technology is the new religion, and the I-pod is the new bible, sold to us a proprietary optimism.

Sources:

[Rising Above The Gathering Storm: Energizing and Employing America for a Brighter Economic Future](http://www.nap.edu/catalog/11463.html) Committee on Prospering in the Global Economy of the 21st Century: An Agenda for American Science and Technology, National Academy of Sciences, National Academy of Engineering, Institute of Medicine (2005)
<http://www.nap.edu/catalog/11463.html>