

Technology

People make tools. Our tool making has built upon itself to become the complicated technologies we have today. We now have the technological capacities to destroy the planet in an afternoon or solar lamps to hold back the dark of night. Yet we have no means as a society to sort through all the technologies to identify which ones harm life or the Earth and which ones further life on Earth. We as a people do not have the common means to say no to innovative technologies that have the capacity to disrupt what we value.

Within a culture that furthers life on Earth, we will develop a means to discern appropriate technologies that serve to enhance the life of all beings. Such an approach would likely favor small, and locally based technologies that further life to continue within the community of place in ways that enhance the well-being of all.

We have no chance to change how our highly technologized culture of harm uses and adopts harmful technologies, especially those that make it possible to accumulate more wealth and increase power over others. Corporations promote untested and unevaluated technologies and refuse liability for any hazards their products generate. Remediation of harmful consequences of technologies becomes a public responsibility. Government neglects to enforce the paltry regulations on technologies out of its concern that it would harm business. Consequently, we live within a soup of dangerous chemicals, face global warming, and experience a tsunami of species extinction.

Those on the sacred path to further life on Earth, however, have the power to discipline how we consume and use technology within our lives. We can discipline ourselves to do the sorting of technologies for ourselves and turn away from those that endanger life on Earth.

To do that requires us to first have a sacred path on which we learn how to firmly discipline ourselves to remove all the ways we manifest our willingness to harm others for self-benefit. We learn how to align our lives with the Earth Interbeing values.¹ In so doing, we grow the capacities to say no to technologies that harm and to choose those that align with our values. With these spiritual tools in place, we have the capacities to investigate our use of technology and discern which technologies appropriately align with our purpose to further life on Earth.

The precautionary principle provides a framework to help investigation. Although intended for innovations, we can help us investigate the technologies we already have. The principle simply says that we should think carefully about a technology furthers life on Earth. If we know it dangerously harms the Earth Interbeing, we should not use technology. If we do not have enough information about its potential for harm, then we should not use a technology until we learn more about it. The precautionary principle does not require absolute certainty but does expect that those wanting to apply the technology have done adequate investigation of its potential harms.

A thing is right when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability, and beauty of the biotic community. It is wrong when it tends otherwise.

Aldo Leopold

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When we apply the precautionary principle to our own use of technology, then it becomes part of our discipline to not use technologies that harm us, life, and the Earth and to refrain from adopting new technologies until we have sufficient certainty that using them will not lead to dangerous consequences. In the process, we also identify those technologies that further life on Earth and incorporate those tools within our lives.

Some technologies will fall into a gray area: they do cause some harm but they benefit us to the degree that we cannot imagine life without them, like farm tractors and laundry machines. Not using them may cause harms greater than the benefits of not using them, such as going back to animal power or slavery to grow food. In these situations, if we decide to continue to use borderline technologies, then we have the responsibility to remediate in some way the harms and suffering they cause others.

¹ Sacred Values of the Earth Interbeing (work in progress): sacred unity, equality, and respect of life on Earth, yielding and bearing the burdens of life, knowing what to do to further life on Earth, humbleness, affectionate caring, sharing and cooperation, compassionate action, and self-discipline to remove what harms life on Earth.

Because we live within a harmful culture, highly dangerous technologies entangle us in our use of them, making it difficult for us to stop using them, like cars. We have many ways to move from point A to point B, but the harmful culture has made it nearly an imperative to drive a car to live. Yet even then, we have options to allow us to reduce our use of cars, from bikes, walking and public transportation to simply reducing the amount we travel. Some technologies impose such dire hazards upon life and the Earth that we must learn how to live without them.

While we may feel that we cannot stop using a harmful technology, we can always correct ourselves to move in direction by finding ways to reduce our use of them. We not look upon such a correction as a painful punishment upon us by the path to further life on Earth. Instead, we take upon ourselves the responsibility to change our ways persistently reduce how we harm. Instead of focusing on of removing harms, we keep our focus on the lessons we from our choices to do the harder but right things to do. what furthers life on Earth, we open ourselves to the

Neither should we feel self-righteous or angry with the that forces us to make unwanted choices. By focusing on harmful culture, we embroil ourselves in circumstances which we have vanishingly little influence. We can exert an over others as a role model of how to live well without dependence on what harms. Furthering the ways of the Interbeing brings joy and celebration, which encourages others to follow our example.

This discipline of removing harmful technologies from our own lives will gradually transform how we live. It applies not only to transportation, but also to food, wellness, children, information processing, recreation, education, safety, and other aspects of daily living. We become more wary of adopting new technologies until we have confidence that they do not cause harm but do further life on Earth. Liberating ourselves from harmful machines and technologies frees us to rediscover what we can do ourselves with simple tools. We can deeply appreciate the tools that we have which further life on Earth.

Just because we can use or make a tool to do something does not mean we should. Living as an Earth interbeing returns us to the ways of interdependence rather than depending on technology. We return to walking humbly and carefully on the Earth which we share with other sacred beings.

Some Harmful Technologies Over Which We Can Exert Self-Discipline

- Cars and pickup trucks
- Air travel
- Factory farmed meat and dairy
- Use and consumption of herbicides, pesticides, fungicides
- Clothing made of synthetic fibers
- Industrialized processed "junk" food
- Plastics
- Single use products
- Guns
- Social media and digital information technologies

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