



## ON TECHNOLOGY

By Wayne Visser

Technology is the creative hand of ingenuity in the marketplace, which has reached down and plucked us from the seething mass of struggling species on Earth.

By multiplying and amplifying our own feeble powers and those of nature, we have attempted to break free from the shackles of environmental incarceration;  
To become masters of our own destiny;  
No longer slaves to world around us.

In this noble aim, we have been largely successful.  
But technology has set us apart from nature, and the illusion of our separation may yet bring about our ultimate downfall.

Technology has provided the building blocks of modern civilization, but still rests on a foundation of values, be they sand or stone;  
It has allowed us to manipulate God's creation, but the consequent equation of life with inanimate machinery is misguided.

Technology embodies the paradoxical nature of the hand, for our hands have the power to reach out with understanding and compassion, or push away in ignorance and fear;  
To offer a healing touch, or strike a harmful blow;  
To trace a loving caress, or crush a hated enemy;  
To wave in joyous celebration, or clench in fists of frustration;  
To execute delicate operations, or function as a blunt instrument;  
To shake in greeting, or wave in departure;  
To applaud with appreciation, or slap with disapproval;  
To join together, or rip apart;  
To make symbolic gestures, or offer practical solutions;  
To bring life into the world, or take life away.

Neither the paranoid Luddites, with their prophecies of doom, nor the evangelical Zealots, with their promise of salvation, see technology in its proper perspective.  
The one has grown cold and fearful crouching in the dark shadow of technology's threat, while the other is feverish and blinded by the brilliant rays of technology's potential.

The hand itself is neither good nor evil, but merely an expression of the will that commands it, the emotions that pulse through its veins, and the principles that guide it.  
Nuclear power can light up a city, as well as obliterate it in a mushroom cloud;  
Radiation can force cancer into remission, as well as poison our precious planet;  
Genetic engineering can prevent terminal diseases, as well as be commercially abused;  
Computers can facilitate interactive education, as well as spread hateful propaganda.

It is true that technology is but a means to an end;  
Therefore, do not shun technology for its own sake.

However, not all new technology constitutes progress;  
Therefore do not embrace technology for its own sake.

Just as each human palm is unique, so each technology must be judged on its own individual merits.





Just as one hand's victory salute is another's defeat, so the economic benefits of any technology should be weighed against its social and ecological costs. And just as a handshake is a symbol of partnership and goodwill, so every technology should strive to extend a hand that is firm, yet gentle; productive, yet caring.

As a guiding principle, remember this: sustainable technology is the hand that gives back more than it takes away.



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