



THE URANTIAN®

Journal of URANTIA® Brotherhood

HOW DO SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY CONTRIBUTE TO SPIRITUAL GROWTH?

The title of this talk seemed like a very short topic to me when I was first asked to speak about it. I didn't see any contribution at all that science and technology had made to spiritual growth. There didn't appear to be a shred of a connection.

Having done some reading and thinking since that time, slowly I've come to the realization that the relationship between science, technology, and spiritual growth is one of, if not the, most urgent and impactful issues of our time.

There seem to be two primary ways that science and technology make their contributions: first in the form of *challenges* that they pose to religious living, and second in the *opportunities* that they create.

The *URANTIA Book* says that "New religious insights arise out of conflicts..." (*1097:6) and that "...there can be no growth without psychic conflict and spiritual agitation." (*1097:7). Well, tremendous conflicts and *challenges* have certainly have created for the soul of man in our scientific age.

But also, science and technology have constructed clear, abundant, accessible *opportunities* for empowering spiritual living - opportunities that have never before existed on our world.

Though there are a great many such challenges and opportunities, I would like to examine only three general types: those created by 1.) the accelerating rate of change; 2.) increased scientific investigations; 3.) changing economic conditions.

The Accelerating Rate Of Change

One of the most penetrating experiential by-products of technological progress is accelerated change. Kenneth Boulding, an economist, has succinctly described the accelerating change of the last three fourths of a century:

"...the date that divides human history into two equal parts is well within living memory. The

world of today is as different from the world in which I was born as that world was from Julius Caesar's. I was born in the middle of human history. Almost as much has happened since I was born as happened before."

Social Psychologist Warren Bennis describes it this way:

"no exaggeration, no hyperbole, no outrage can realistically describe the extent and pace of change ... in fact only the exaggeration seems to be true."

It is clear that our ways of life are being dramatically altered, and are being altered at an exponential rate. Science is continually feeding change with new investigation and 90% of all scientists who ever lived are alive today. Technology's expansion is self feeding. One new invention may spawn 20 new applications, each of which may in turn spawn 20 more. The rate of assimilation of new products and new ways of life is also increasing dramatically. We live in a world of Rip Van Winkle, every morning that we wake up, the world has changed again. Who can keep up with it? "The modern world of politics trying to keep up with the modern world of technology" says Sidney Harris, "reminds me of an orangutan at the controls of a supersonic airplane."

Amplifying the unsettledness attendant upon change is its unpredictability. Listen to the words of these relatively recent oracle readers: "The ordinary 'horseless carriage' is at present a luxury for the wealthy; and although its price will probably fall in the future, it will never of course, come into as common use as the bicycle." That was written in the *Literary Digest*, October 14, 1899. Or this from Lee Deforest in 1926:

"While theoretically and technically, television may be feasible, commercially and financially, I consider it an impossibility, a development of which we need waste little time dreaming."

But this is my favorite, from Science Digest, of all places, in 1948:

"Landing and moving around on the moon offers so many serious problems for human beings that it may take science another 200 years to lick them."

Predicting is difficult, if not impossible, but when does it seem as if life will slow down again? If you're like me, you usually think to yourself: "If I can just hang on for another couple of weeks, I know this whole thing will blow over and things will get back to normal again." Dorothy was probably quite a bit more accurate when she said: "Toto, I've a feeling that we're not in Kansas anymore!" A Melchizedek of Nebadon is characteristically just as blunt:

"This new and oncoming social order will not settle down . . . for a millenium. The human race must become reconciled to a procession of changes, adjustments, and readjustments. Mankind is on the march toward a new and unrevealed planetary destiny." (*1086:4)

THE
URANTIAN®
Journal of URANTIA® Brotherhood

Published Quarterly by
URANTIA Brotherhood
533 Diversey Parkway
Chicago Illinois 60614

Subscription Price: \$5.00 a year

International Subscribers - add \$1.00 for postage

* All quotations within this Journal, unless otherwise indicated, are from *The URANTIA Book*, ©1955, and are used with the permission of the URANTIA Foundation, the copyright owner.

Inasmuch as there is no official URANTIA Brotherhood or Foundation interpretation of the teachings of *The URANTIA Book*, the views expressed herein are based wholly upon each author's understanding and personal religious experience.

Copyright © 1983 by URANTIA Brotherhood Corporation. All rights reserved. Printed in U.S.A.

"Urantia society can never hope to settle down as in past ages." (*1086:6) "The violent swing from an age of miracles to an age of machines," says *The URANTIA Book*, "has proved altogether upsetting to man." (*2077:2) We can expect to be dislodged from our environment of familiarity on a very regular basis. Rapid change will be far more constant than constancy. Amidst this turmoil of change, the progeny of technological progress, lies a huge spiritual challenge to find real constancy and real stability in the experience of knowing God.

"During the psychologically unsettled times of the twentieth century, amid the economic upheavals, the moral crosscurrents, and the sociologic rip tides of the cyclonic transitions of a scientific era, thousands upon thousands of men and women have become humanly dislocated; they are anxious, restless, fearful, uncertain, and unsettled; as never before in the world's history they need the consolation and stabilization of sound religion. In the face of unprecedented scientific achievement and mechanical development there is spiritual stagnation and philosophic chaos." (*1090:2)

The challenge of change has provided a tremendous stimulus to spiritual growth - a stimulus to find God and the stability of knowing God in an environment that's constantly changing.

In addition to that challenge, there are also clear opportunities. Our ability to communicate with one another has blossomed since the industrial revolution. We have truly become a global village. Events in any part of the world can be immediately known and have an immediate impact on any other part of the world. The opportunities for the cross fertilization of ideas and cultures is overwhelming. If you were to plot the growth in velocity of human modes of travel for example, you would see it begin to skyrocket at about the turn of the century. We've gone from traveling by camel at 12 mph, to traveling at 100 mph by steam locomotive in the 19th century, to traveling at speeds exceeding the speed of sound by supersonic commercial jet, to traveling at speeds of 18,000 mph in space. You would see the same sort of graph if you plotted communication increases, starting with Gutenberg's press in the 1400's (though the Chinese had one earlier), to 1500 when Europe was producing 1000 book titles per year, to the 1970's when the world was producing 1000 book titles per day (and this in an age when telecommunications and the computer are dominating modes of communication).

New ideas are assimilated gluttonously. So many new developments seem to get popularized in postindustrial society. We are the most well informed civilization that ever existed. Someone once said that if Jesus were alive today, he wouldn't be crucified, he would be asked to appear on the Phil Donahue show.

All of this acceleration in travel and communication bodes for an increase in the power of the individual and the small group. Their voices can now have a far more immediate and effective impact on the course of world events, on the way that people live, and on the values that they hold.

In her book *The Aquarian Conspiracy*, Marilyn Ferguson discusses networks, one of the outgrowths of accelerated travel and communications, as a potent vehicle for world transformation. She also discusses the Nobel Prize-winning theory of Dissipative Structures, which, when applied to societies (an open ended, energy consuming system just like living things), explains that an action by small groups or networks can have an impact large enough to provoke a shift into a higher level of organization - much the way biological evolution moves from one level of organization to another.

Examples of networks include: Gandhi's grouping unities for political action; the Hunger Project - organized individuals all over the world committed to eliminating starvation; and Urantia Brotherhood is also a good example.

This is what Ferguson has to say about networks:

"Amplified by electronic communications, freed from the old restraints of family and culture, the network is the antidote to alienation. It generates power enough to remake society. It offers the individual emotional, intellectual, spiritual, and economic support, it is an invisible home, a powerful means of altering the course of institutions, especially government.

Any one who discovers the rapid proliferation of networks and understands their strength can see the impetus for world wide transformation. The network is the institution of our time."

Change in the techniques of travel and communication have amplified, to an extraordinary degree, the power and number of networks - one of our foremost vehicles for spiritual growth and transformation.

Increased Scientific Investigation

One of the outgrowths of scientific investigation has been secularism, the idea that the more that we learn about the universe the less God becomes, and the less

that we need religion. According to *The URANTIA Book*, secularism poses a perilous challenge to civilization. Some of the harshest warnings that I have read in *The URANTIA Book* have pertained directly to the prevailing secularist power structures and what is called the chief barrier to world peace: Nationalism. Making matters worse, science has delivered to the world the capacity for total world annihilation. *The URANTIA Book* has what appear to be mixed forecasts regarding the challenge of secularism. We read for example:

"The complete secularization of science, education, industry, and society can lead only to disaster. During the first third of the twentieth century Urantians killed more human beings than were killed during the whole of the Christian dispensation up to that time. And this is only the beginning of the dire harvest of materialism and secularism; still more terrible destruction is yet to come." (*2082:5)

"Materialism denies God, secularism simply ignores him; at least that was the earlier attitude. More recently, secularism has assumed a more militant attitude, assuming to take the place of the religion whose totalitarian bondage it onetime resisted. Twentieth century secularism tends to affirm that man does not need God. But beware! this godless philosophy of human society will lead only to unrest, animosity, unhappiness, war, and world-wide disaster." (*2081:5)

The midwayers' summary of the Urmia lectures include these statements:

"With scientific progress, wars are going to become more and more devastating until they become almost racially suicidal" (*1490:3)

"There shall be wars and rumors of wars - nation will rise against nation - just as long as the world's political sovereignty is divided up and unjustly held by a group of nation-states." (*1490:6)

"...global wars will go on until the government of mankind is created. Global sovereignty will prevent global wars - nothing else can." (*1490:7)

Can we look to the governments of sovereign nations to develop the peace-creating world government? I don't know. Someone once said that it is just as unlikely to find a department of peace in a sovereign nation as it would be to find a department of life in a funeral home.

Despite the dire consequences of secularism, its challenge delivers a tremendous opportunity to the soul of mankind for spiritual growth.

And *The URANTIA Book* is not entirely doom and gloom about the results of nationalistic secularism:

"...Christianity ... stands face to face with a struggle for existence which is even more ominous than those eventful crises which have characterized its past battles for dominance.

Religion is now confronted by the challenge of a new age of scientific minds and materialistic tendencies. In this gigantic struggle between the secular and spiritual, the religion of Jesus will eventually triumph." (*2075:2, 3)

We should also acknowledge the fact that secularism has delivered many blessings to civilization - industrial creativity, democratic government and civil liberties to name a few.

Ironically, after centuries of conflict expression between science and religion, post-Newtonian science, and especially physics, appears to be uncovering a foundation of bedrock for the reality of religious experience.

The more that science reveals about the physical universe, the more it seems to resemble what Eastern mystics have said about it for centuries: life is a magic show, an illusion. "There is nothing in the moving world but mind itself," says a Hindu sutra. As physical reality proves to be less and less "real," there is increasing acknowledgement of a presence beneath the surface which is non-dimensional, without weight, and beyond time, - the reality of the metaphysical, the existence of underlying non-logical relationships, and especially the reality of personal experience in and of itself.

Physicist Gary Zukav, in his book *The Dancing Wu Li Masters*, said, "There is no question about it. Something very exciting is happening. Physicists have proved rationally that our rational ideas about the world in which we live are profoundly deficient."

Science has not been without its own dogmatism. For example, the French academy announced at one point that it would not accept any further reports of meteorites, since it was ridiculous to think that rocks could fall out of the sky. Shortly thereafter a rain of meteorites came close to breaking the windows of the Academy. But science now seems more generously receptive to unusual ideas. Niels Bohr, the eminent physicist, once remarked of an idea put forth by a colleague: "It isn't crazy enough to be true." Science is continually generating new paradigms for understanding the universe. One of them is offered by a scientist by the name of Pribram who hypothesized that the world is not what it seems to

be but rather is actually a holographic projection - a three dimensional projected image. How similar this sounds to the midwayers' description:

"Mankind is slow to perceive that, in all that is personal, matter is the skeleton of morontia, and that both are the reflected shadow of enduring spirit reality. How long before you will regard time as the moving image of eternity and space as the fleeting shadow of Paradise realities?" (*2021:3)

Increasingly, scientific investigation seems to be uncovering the reality that "The universe is not like the laws, mechanisms, and the uniformities which the scientist discovers, ... but rather like the curious, thinking, choosing, creative, combining, and discriminating scientist..." (*2080:8)

There is no real conflict between science and religion and science now seems to be building a solid infrastructure for the support of the reality of religious experience.

Changing Economic Conditions

Largely due to industrialization, we live in a world of enormous political/economic upheaval. We live in a far more interdependent, complex, technocratic environment. Economic theories can't seem to cope with the complexity. The industrialized countries are catapulted economically ahead of less developed countries who scramble just to develop some form of industrialized production. While the majority of people in industrialized countries live better than the kings and tycoons of pre-industrial society, the majority of people in developing countries continue to live in poverty. Just this effort to industrialize poses a large challenge for spiritual leadership. Will industrialization take place cooperatively or at the point of a gun?

Methods of business management are challenged around the world and we see a trend away from the Western system of management, with its roots in the military system of organization, toward more flexibility and creativity, more worker participation in management, and more decentralization of operations.

Big business, big government, big wars, and big economic maladies leave us feeling small and insignificant. We are challenged to realize that the true experience of power lies not in big buildings, big business, or big government, but within ourselves and the way that we empower others.

When Jesus smiled on someone, that individual experienced an increased capacity for solving his problems. Now *that* is power!

Increased economic affluence and leisure time are giving more people opportunities for what Maslow called Self-Actualization. If leisure time is used well, it can be an abundant resource for spiritual growth.

Interestingly, technology was responsible for the rise of the modern city - and will be responsible for what appears to be its decentralization.

The modern city grew up around the turn of the century. Business and industrial activity aggregated there because they needed to be within walking-talking distance of one another. Steel frame technology and the automobile arose about the same time so that dense high rise construction was both feasible and practical. The more people that could be jammed in one business area the better. Our secularist heritage assisted in planning dismal and dislocating urban centers. They didn't have to be built that way, but it made good economic sense even though it might have been spiritually and environmentally repugnant.

The most poignant, prophetic statement that I have ever read about the challenge of the modern city was written by the Indian chief Seattle in 1851. Upon selling 2 million acres of Indian land in the Northwest territory, he delivered an address in which he said in part:

"I do not know. Our ways are different from your ways. The sight of your cities pains the eyes of the red man. There is no quiet place in the white man's cities. No place to hear the unfurling of leaves in spring or the rustle of the insect's wings. The clatter only seems to insult the ears. And what is there to life if a man cannot hear the lonely cry of the whippoorwill or the arguments of the frogs around the pond at night?..."

"The air is precious to the red man for all things share the same breath, the beast, the tree, the man, they all share the same breath. The white man does not seem to notice the air he breathes. Like a man dying for many days he is numb to the stench. But if we sell you our land, you must remember that the air is precious to us, that the air shares its spirit with all the life it supports..."

"You must teach your children that the ground beneath their feet is the ashes of our grandfathers. Whatever befalls the earth befalls the sons of the earth. If men spit upon the ground, they spit upon themselves...."

"This we know; the earth does not belong to man; man belongs to the earth. All things are connected. We may be brothers after all. We shall see. One thing we know which the white man may one day discover: our God is the same God.

"You may think now that you own Him as you wish to own our land; but you cannot. He is the God of man, and His compassion is equal for the red man and the white. This earth is precious to Him, and to harm the earth is to heap contempt on its creator. The whites too shall pass; perhaps sooner than all other tribes. Contaminate your bed and you will one night suffocate in your own waste.

"But in your perishing you will shine brightly fired by the strength of the God who brought you to this land and for some special purpose gave you dominion over this land and over the red man.

"That destiny is a mystery to us, for we do not understand when the buffalo are all slaughtered, the wild horses are tame, the secret corners of the forest heavy with scent of many men and the view of the ripe hills blotted by talking wires.

Where is the thicket? Gone. Where is the eagle, Gone.

The end of living and the beginning of survival."

But technology is now playing a large part in what appears to be a trend toward the decentralization of cities and business. Advances in telecommunications now allow business to be located virtually anywhere without losing touch with the rest of the business world. The result could be decentralized cities that are richly integrated with nature instead of isolated from it.

As home and business computers become more popular, we will likely see an increase in the percentage of time that people in our service-based economy will spend working out of their homes. The increase in time spent at home is a coming opportunity for family culture, the building block of civilization and our most important character-building institution.

If you sum up all of these challenges and opportunities, what would be the overall long distance view of science and technology's contribution to spiritual growth? I believe that, if we could see this century from 1000 years hence, we would say that technology catapulted civilization into a more advanced spiritual age. If we make it out of the current age of nationalism alive, it seems clear that we will see the birth of a new age of spiritual growth, and science and technology will have built the physical and social context for that age.

From various sources, we get glimmerings of the transformation that is afoot. Marilyn Ferguson tells us about what she calls the Aquarian Conspiracy.

"Broader than reform, deeper than revolution, this benign conspiracy for a human agenda has triggered the most rapid cultural alignment in history."

Lewis Mumford talks about the age of "The New Person," the age that he says will make the renaissance look like a still birth.

The URANTIA Book tells us that we are quivering on the brink of the greatest spiritual renaissance that the world has ever known. Our social ship has just left the sheltered bays of established tradition and begun its voyage to a new age on the high seas of planetary destiny, and says *The URANTIA Book*:

"...the soul of man, as never before in the world's history, needs carefully to scrutinize its charts of morality and painstakingly to observe the compass of religious guidance." (*1086:6)

Science and technology have provided the stimulus and the opportunity for a new spiritual age, and the world, as never before, needs the response and guidance of spirit-led individuals during this difficult and dangerous time of transition.

—James Johnston
Toledo, Ohio

*"No matter what the apparent conflict between materialism and the teachings of Jesus may be, you can rest assured that, in the ages to come, the teachings of the Master will fully triumph." (*2076:7)*
