

**The Loss of The Natural Environment: A Group Relations Perspective on Our Failure to  
Take Collective Action**

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## **ABSTRACT**

### **The Loss of The Natural Environment: A Group Relations Perspective on Our Failure to Take Collective Action**

This paper seeks to contribute to our understanding of American society's failure to take collective action in the face of substantial loss to our natural environment. We argue that Group Relations Theory is an essential perspective for understanding this inaction, as it allows us to see how social structures function to protect us from the unpleasant emotions provoked by realization of the environmental crisis.

We present evidence of how the defensive mechanisms of splitting and denial serve to defend us against the unpleasant emotions evoked by the loss of the natural environment. We find evidence of these defense mechanisms in the way we idealize technology while marginalizing critics of technology, in the way we export our dirt and in the way we maintain environmental secrets. We explore practical methods, suggested by the Group Relations perspective, for enabling collective action.

**Key words:** group relations theory, loss, defensive mechanisms, social structure, natural environment, denial, technology.

## **Introduction**

### The Loss of the Natural Environment

This paper begins with two assumptions: First, that untamed technological development is destroying the natural environment; second, that relatively little collective action is being taken in American society to halt this degradation. In this paper we seek to understand this dilemma by examining it through the lens of Group Relations Theory. This exploration leads to practical suggestions for facilitating collective action.

Many aspects of the destruction of the natural environment are matters of scientific controversy, e.g. global climate change, or at least the pace of climate change. However, ecologists Paul and Anne Ehrlich (1997) of Stanford University provide us with several well-established findings that are frightening: Humanity has already overshoot earth's carrying capacity by a simple measure: no nation is supporting its present population on a sustainable flow of renewable resources. A few examples are:

- Water from ...aquifers (stores of fresh water accumulated over thousands of years) which are recharged at rates measured in inches per year is being pumped out in feet per year” p.40
- Rich agricultural soils which are formed at rates of inches per millennium are being eroded at rates of inches per decade.
- Species and populations of microorganisms, plants, and other animals are being exterminated at a rate unprecedented in 65 million years – on the order of 10,000 times faster than they can be replaced by the evolution of new ones.

Faced squarely, these developments evoke strong and difficult emotions. Such feelings may include: 1) Sadness and mourning for the loss of aspects of the natural environment that may never be returned to their pre-industrial state, 2) anxiety concerning future scenarios that include the dramatic uncertainties of climate change and prospects of a lifestyle lacking in such basic natural resources as clean water and air, 3) anger at those who are perceived as responsible for the degradation of the environment as well as anger at our helplessness to reverse environmental damage, and 4) feelings of apathy, hopelessness, paralysis or denial at how enormous the problem is.

### A Group Relations Perspective

Group Relations Theory has pioneered the study of the ways in which social constructions help us to manage difficult emotions (Hirschhorn, 1990). Although Group Relations theory is often applied to the study of small groups or clearly defined units of a workplace (Gustafson & Cooper 1985, Rioch 1985), others have pioneered the application to whole organizations, social systems and societies (Miller, 1985, 1983). This theoretical frame illuminates the question of how social structures may serve as a defense against anxiety and other feared emotions. Once defensive systems are in place, they may successfully keep troubling emotions at bay for some time, but at a cost. Defensive social structures inhibit constructive creative problem solving and collective action. They create dysfunctional systems that inhibit the best performance of organizational and social actors.

Thus Group Relations Theory is an essential perspective through which to explore the dilemma of our failure to take collective action to halt the loss of the natural environment. We begin our exploration with a brief description of relevant aspects of Group Relations Theory. We then present evidence of how the defensive mechanisms of splitting and denial are embedded in

our social structures and serve to defend us against the unpleasant emotions evoked by the loss of the natural environment. We find evidence of these defense mechanisms in the way we idealize technology while marginalizing critics of technology, in the way we export our dirt, and in the way we maintain environmental secrets. Each of these mechanisms will be described as it serves to defend us against the difficult emotions provoked by the loss of the natural environment. We conclude with implications for action based on our analysis and on Group Relations theory's tradition of practice.

### **Group Relations Theory and The Natural Environment**

A group relations perspective on the loss of the natural environment can help us understand how social systems develop and function as a defense against anxiety and other difficult emotions. Two aspects of GR Theory are particularly salient to understanding how social defenses may interfere with taking collective action to halt the destruction of the natural environment. First, Group Relations Theory addresses the emotional side of human organizations that underlies work activity. Second, Group Relations Theory takes a social systems perspective, focusing on whole patterns of interaction among groups or individuals (Miller & Rice 1975, Rioch 1975, Wells 1980). Each of these aspects of the GR perspective is briefly explained below.

#### Focus on the Underlying Emotional Life of Organizations and Societies

GR Theory can illuminate the irrational aspects of organizations and societies. This perspective allows its practitioners to explore what makes an organization, or a social arrangement tick on an emotional level. This understanding is especially important when an organization or society seeks to make changes but experiences difficulty in doing so, as emotional underpinnings may be supporting social structures that are the target of change efforts.

If these emotions are not recognized, efforts to change the structures and practices that they support will fail.

In a classic example, Isabelle Menzies (1975) applied this theory to a case study of a hospital nursing service. Nursing, she notes, evokes strong, disturbing emotions. Nurses' work requires touching the bodies of sick and dying people. Furthermore, nurses form attachments to their patients, and those relationships are bound to be broken.

To defend themselves against these emotional difficulties, the nurses in Menzies' study organized their work in a way that minimized contact with any particular patient. Lists of tasks dominated the work schedule rather than lists of patients to be cared for in a more holistic way. Also, schedules of frequent rotation for students and shifts for graduate nurses prevented attachments. Thus the anxieties provoked by being close to sick and dying patients was controlled, but at the cost of holistic good care for patients and diminished work satisfaction for nurses. Only with this understanding of the emotional underpinnings of the current system, would change be possible.

Group Relations theory can, similarly, be applied to the environmental crisis. From this perspective, we would hypothesize that the environmental crisis evokes strong and troubling emotions that would likely lead to the construction of social structures that protect us from experiencing those emotions. For example, in some industries we have evolved a system of manufacturing that places the most polluting part of the production process in a part of the world that is as remote from the USA as possible. This arrangement allows us to deny the extent of our pollution problem, but at the cost of failing to develop systems for cleaner production. In addition, this system creates an environmental injustice.

## Applying a Whole Social Systems Perspective

Second, GR Theory is inclusive, focusing on social systems or whole patterns of interaction among groups or individuals (Rioch 1975, Miller and Rice 1975, Wells 1980). This approach allows us to explore how one part of a system may, unwittingly, serve to reduce the anxiety of another more powerful part of the system.

For example, environmental justice advocates argue that locating polluting facilities in low-income, minority occupied neighborhoods unjustly assaults the health of those less powerful citizens. A Group Relations perspective would include both privileged and underprivileged neighborhoods in its analysis, and would look at the emotional underpinnings of this physical arrangement. Siting polluting facilities out of view of the wealthier, more powerful members of society reduces their anxiety about the degradation of the environment and fosters the comforting illusion that they are clean and safe because their waste is out of sight. However, if our analysis takes a whole social system perspective, and considers poor as well as wealthy neighborhoods, then there is no "away" (Sosnowchik 2000).

## Social Defenses Against the Difficult Emotions Provoked by the Loss of the Natural Environment

### Evidence of Splitting

Splitting involves separating out or breaking apart the positive and negative aspects of a whole. The person, group, organization or object comes to be seen as solely good or bad, rather than an intermingling of the two aspects. Splitting allows a simpler, more black and white view of the world, and defends us against seeing that both good and bad exist in the same person, group, organization or object. Splitting allows us to maintain our psychological comfort by

disowning aspects of ourselves that would cause discomfort. Wells (1980) notes, "As human beings we have a tendency to act in self-serving ways. We eschew parts of ourselves that make us uncomfortable, but readily see those parts in others (p.177)."

An example of splitting is when nuclear power is seen as only a good force because it enables the production of cheaper energy. What is neglected in this view are the negative, problematic, or dangerous aspects of nuclear energy. When splitting occurs, the focus comes to be exclusively on the positive or negative aspects of an object or process. An easy way to recognize when splitting is occurring is that there is no room for a balanced view, and no ability to recognize the positive and negative aspects of one issue, object, person, or problem.

In GR Theory, splitting is one phase in a psychodynamic process of splitting, projective identification, and denial. Through this process psychological comfort is achieved by first disowning a part of ourselves that makes us uncomfortable -- our greed, for example. Then we locate those parts in another person, group or organization that comes to represent, or symbolize the undesirable characteristic. (In our example, corporate CEOs symbolize greedy behavior.) Finally, we deny that we share the undesirable attribute, viewing it as a characteristic of the other. (We condemn those greedy CEOs, and do not recognize our own consumptive behavior patterns and its impact on the natural environment.) GR Theory emphasizes that, through this process, we are tied to the other, as we need them to carry the undesirable trait in order to perpetuate the illusion that we are free of it. We explore how these dynamics operate in order to reduce our anxiety concerning the loss of the natural environment in the following section.

### Idealizing Technology

We find evidence of splitting in the way Americans idealize technology. Many times technology or technological solutions to problems are heralded as magical, pure, or brilliant, in

language that evokes visions of a savior. For example, there is some evidence that liquid anti-bacterial soaps may kill off too many of the bacteria we need to fight off viruses. Yet the appeal of finding a technological solution to fighting germs and staying clean is deeply appealing. When technology is criticized, which it rarely is these days, it is often cast as dirty, destructive, and evil. Strangely enough, one of the few places this view of technology is reversed is in Hollywood films, where technology is often portrayed as inhuman and evil (e.g., “The Matrix” or Terminator movies). The extremely separate and disparate ways in which technology is viewed indicates that the psychological dynamics of splitting may be operating. We are unable to integrate or see the relatedness of the positive and negative aspects of technology, unable to consider both its benefits and deficits at the same time. We look below at a number of examples that illustrate the phenomenon of splitting and highlight how difficult it currently is for us to critically examine, to place limits on, or to say no to new technology.

Over fifteen years ago a colleague wrote a book about the potential downside of the computer revolution (Brod, 1984). He had hoped to start a debate about the ways in which computers might create unemployment, remove many of our privacy safeguards, and allow bosses to exert more negative control over their employees. Although it received positive reviews, and sold very well in Japan, it was largely ignored in the United States. In fact it is now rare to hear questions raised about the downside of computer technology. We want our airplanes, computers, and communication systems to all go faster. Rarely does anyone wonder if speed is always such a good thing. We demand better and faster-acting drugs, better fertilizers, and better pesticides; all the while ignoring some of the lessons we have learned about the negative effects of these complex substances (Carson, 1962; McKibben, 1989). It appears that we have turned a blind eye to the dangers which might be part of technological advances.

In the U.S. we appear to start from the belief that scientific advances are always good (Lasch, 1991) and technology brings with it progress, better standards of living, and healthier people, countries and worlds. Certainly, in the United States we have some good reasons to revere and worship science and technology. There are countless examples of the ways technology has enhanced people's standard of living, health, hospital care, and lifestyles, so that problems with technology often seem minor in comparison. Especially when we contrast our lives with the lives of the world's poor, we find plenty of reason to revere technology.

Not only do we start with the assumption that technology is good, but we appear to be more and more intent on ignoring its dangers. Residential gas line explosions are labeled rare events, the melt-down of the nuclear plant at Chernobyl is attributed to incompetent Russian technology (Cherniak, 1996) and the explosion of the Union Carbide Plant in Bhopal, India is ignored because of its distance (Shrivastava & Mitroff 1987). Conversations about how to cope with the increasing amount of garbage and toxic waste we are producing are confined to recycling activists (Truini 2001). Many of the potential dangers of the technological revolution are currently ignored, or not discussed.

What seems to be missing from the media and civic debate is any attempt to try to examine the benefits and downside of our current and new technology. When a technological problem is unearthed the solution proposed often involves resorting to another technology to repair it. For example, as our lives move at ever more blinding speeds, in part due to the globalization and increased rapidity of communication, we turn to drugs so that we can function with less sleep or to more and faster ways to keep up with the flow of communication (cell phones, e-mail, fax machines, etc.). We rarely question whether the speed of communication is helping or hindering our work, progress or happiness. If we examine the proliferation of new

communication technologies, and the way the public is consuming those technologies we are left with the conclusion that faster and more information must be better.

Most analytic tools, and many philosophical systems, start with the assumption that there are positive and negative incentives associated with any change. This is one of the reasons that tools like gap analysis and cost-benefit analysis are so popular in most businesses today. We know that technology is fallible, as described in Perrow's book on Normal Accidents (1984). Yet, there are few systems in place to evaluate new technology and few public debates about whether new technology should be adopted, modified or left on the shelf. Unlike the Amish, discussed below, our society does not have a process for considering whether new technology fits with our priorities and values (Putnam 1994).

#### Marginalizing Critics by Romanticizing Them

We find further evidence of splitting in the attitudes we adopt toward critics of technology. One way we marginalize critical voices and deny them a place in mainstream policy discussions is to romanticize them. A case in point is our misunderstandings *of* the Amish, a religion-based communal culture within America that shuns technology. Living simply without electricity, automobiles, or telephones, the Amish are successful farmers and crafts people.

They ride in horse-drawn carriages and use mule teams to plow the land. Their houses are hand made through collective effort, and are distinguished by clothes drying on outdoor clothes lines wood-burning stoves and Kerosene lamps. Their lives are romanticized by tourists who are eager to take home a hand-made quilt or rocking chair as a memento of this life, which is not so cluttered with technological devices.

Yet the thoughtful side of the Amish approach to technology is rarely seen, and the lessons they have to offer rarely taken. A closer look at the Amish reveals that they are not anti-

technology, as they are commonly perceived. They are just careful users of technology. They put their community values first, and “consciously steer their cultural course in the sea of alternatives opened by technological advance, accepting only those that enhance their way of life...and their “sense of connection to the material world” (Bende 1996).

The Amish have social structures that channel and contain technological development and adoption. For example, a council was called to assess the impact of using a pay phone to facilitate the sale of produce to a local grocery store. The council decided on a trial period during which the impact of the telephone on the community would be assessed, and recommended only sparing use of this technology (Bende 1996).

Although it is not well known, the Amish have a strong entrepreneurial spirit. In the last thirty years, as land has become more expensive and scarce, many Amish have opened small enterprises (Kraybill & Nolt, 1995). Within these settings, the Amish have had to evaluate technology in a different light in order to compete with other similar businesses. For example, the authors recently visited an Amish machine shop. Most of the tools are powered by compressed air, and generators are used to produce electricity. When one takes a look at Amish enterprises it is apparent that they are not opposed to all technology, rather they evaluate it by whether or not it fits in with their religious and communal values. Sometimes the solutions they come up with seem ludicrous. For example, Amish farmers are allowed to have tractors with metal wheels, rubber tires are forbidden. Ostensibly this is so that the equipment will be used only for farming and not for joy-riding or socializing. Nevertheless, what might appear strange to us provides a consistent and thoughtful social structure for the Amish.

The presence of these structures in the Amish society highlights the absence of similar structures in the American society. Our misconception of the Amish as simply anti-technology

allows us to dismiss their thoughtfulness about appropriate technology, and to not take them seriously. We are also insulated from learning anything from the way the Amish evaluate and use technology. Thus we can feel secure in our technophilia, and our sense that those who shun or scrutinize technology development are backward – albeit romantically so.

### Marginalizing Critics: Finding critical voices in victims and a Madman

Other voices, critical of technology, are raised on the margins of American society. Coming from the mouths of victims, e.g. people sickened by Agent Orange (Global Newswire 2002, Tokarski 1990), and a madman, the Unabomber, these voices are readily dismissed. Their messages rarely enter into the mainstream of technology policy debate. Not surprisingly, these criticisms, pushed to the margins, become extreme. A clear example of this is Theodore Kazinsky, also known as the “Unabomber.”

During his sixteen-year career as a technology critic, the Unabomber carried out sixteen atrocious bombings, killing three people and injuring twenty-three (Sales, 1995). His manifesto, “Industrial Society and its Future,” makes the central point that “‘the industrial-technological system’ in which we live is a social, psychological, and environmental disaster for the human race.” (Sales 1995).

The existence of a person like the Unabomber is further evidence of splitting. When critical voices go unheard critics are driven to extremes. Once critics start to make extreme statements or actions, the rest of us can dismiss them as crazy, deluded or stupid. One problem with this is that we thereby dismiss legitimate criticisms along with the “mad” person who is making the statement. Thus we lose the chance to hear about problems or issues which may threaten our health or safety. We are also able to split off and dismiss our own questions or doubts about technological issues because the critic is “bad” or “crazy.”

## The Uses of Denial

### Denial and addictive behavior

Why are we so enamored of technology that we increasingly ignore its limitations and dangers? Group Relations Theory would posit that when we consistently ignore prevalent or obvious dangers we are in a state of denial. Denial can function to allow us to enjoy the benefits of something without recognizing the dangers it poses to our health, our community or our world. Denial can function as a mechanism of defense against anxiety and other difficult emotions provoked by the loss of the natural environment.

Denial allows us to only see the positive side of an event or behavior, while ignoring the negative aspects. If we are in denial about the deficits of technology, then we will be oblivious to many of the warning signs that things are going horribly wrong. There is now a good deal of evidence that technology has changed the way we relate to others (Hallowell, 1999; Ullman, 1997), has cut down severely on civic dialogue (Putnam, 1995; Putnam, 1996), and is destroying our habitat (Ehrlich & Ehrlich 1997). Not unlike the person who has consumed vast quantities of alcohol only to wake up to realize they are in the later stages of cirrhosis of the liver, denial may allow us to forget the consequences of our behavior until it is too late.

Many scholars have attributed our lack of concern about the way we are polluting our environment and our exaltation of technology as symptoms of a desire to control our own destiny (McKibben, 1989). Feminists have been particularly vocal about decrying this aspect of technology and the way it degrades the ecosystem (Merchant, 1980). If, as Becker (CITE) claims, we are enraged that we are not gods, and that we must someday die, then it is likely that we will turn our consciousness to devising ways to feel immortal. It is also likely that we would express our rage at being out of control by trying to limit and control the circumstances which

escape our grasp (i.e., mother nature). Technology is the perfect vehicle for trying to control the uncontrollable. Technology is accurate, powerful, and immortal.

We can now explore outer space, predict the weather, change the face of the earth with construction, change the flow of rivers (through the use of dams), create energy, and save lives through advanced medical science, just to name a few of our technological accomplishments. We hope that we will soon be able to control the weather, to travel quickly to other planets if we pollute the earth to the point where it is uninhabitable, and create technologies which will make us immortal (Rifkin, 1998). It is no wonder that we are so enamored of technology, as it promises to allow us to live as gods. This is the ultimate denial. Technology is a vehicle with tremendous constructive as well as destructive power. Idealizing technology and using it to compensate for our human limitations may result in the destruction of exactly what makes us human.

#### Denial of the dirty side of technology: Exporting American Dirt

Exportation is another mechanism used in American society for denying the waste and dirt that are the by-products of our technocentrist life style. “Out of sight, out of mind” is the operating principle. A dynamic of the globalization of business is the exportation of “dirty” manufacturing facilities to developing countries, and the growth of “cleaner” service and electronics industries on American soil. Some of the dirtiest (most polluting) American industries, such as chemicals and automobiles, have been among the first to build manufacturing facilities in developing countries, such as China and Mexico, as geopolitical developments have opened these countries to such development. Thus glue fumes in Nike factories may sicken factory workers in Southeast Asia (Greenwire 1998), but that is far away and only occasionally brought to our attention by news reports.

At a conference on medical waste <sup>(1)</sup> the importance of cleanliness to our status in the global community is apparent in the language and practices of the health care providers in attendance. An anesthesiologist describes a program, called “REMEDY,” to recycle surgical instruments that have been brought into the operating room but not used on the patient. These instruments are collected and treated as “contaminated waste.” They are sterilized, but still considered to be *not* clean enough for use on an American patient. They may, however, be shipped to hospitals in developing countries, such as Bulgaria, Albania, and Mongolia where they are gratefully received and used in human surgeries, or veterinarians may use them on American “animals.”<sup>1</sup>

American surgeons defend this practice, by claiming that they do believe the recycled instruments are clean enough for use on other American human patients. They do not reuse these instruments, however, because to do so would open them to malpractice suits. Thus a hierarchy of cleanliness is created, with American human beings on top, and beneath them, other types of American animals and human beings from developing nations.

#### Denial by maintaining environmental secrets

Heller & Mrockzo (forthcoming) found that companies sometimes develop environmentally friendly products, but then don't advertise or announce their green deeds. Several good reasons explain this undercover environmentalism. In one example, a company removed a toxic ingredient from their manufacturing process, but feared that publicity would provoke a negative reaction from customers who owned the original version of the product with the ingredient present.

Other companies feared that customers would think their product was not of good quality if they knew that it contained recycled parts. In another example, a company worried that if they

touted a green aspect of a product, they would be accused of "green washing," and more polluting aspects of the business would be publicly criticized.

In another case, Kodak's single-use-camera, the product has been revised to facilitate recycling, but customers continue to perceive it as an environmentally damaging disposable product -- even though recycling symbols are on every package. Thus customers and producers collaborate on keeping environmental good news secret. This dynamic contributes to our collective denial of the environmental crisis.

### **Discussion and Conclusion: Taking Back Both Sides of Our Reactions**

We explored evidence above that in American society splitting and denial serve as social defense mechanisms to manage difficult emotions aroused by the loss of the natural environment. The result is that we are, to some extent, spared the sadness, anxiety and anger that confronting environmental crises entails. At the same time, we are paying the price of environmental unconsciousness and an inability to take collective action. A group relations perspective on American society's relationship with the natural environment suggests that the remedy is to take back the split-off parts of ourselves. Thus reclaiming our grief, our anxiety and our critical selves is key to mobilizing collective action. But how can we do this?

One model comes from a nascent project recently organized within the electronics industry, The Electronics Product Recovery and Recycling (EPR2) Summit<sup>2</sup>. This effort seeks to address the environmental problem created by the now considerable mass of electronic products that have reached the end of their useful life cycle. These products are inappropriate for disposal in either landfills or incinerators because they contain toxic ingredients, and several states are considering enacting laws to prohibit disposal in these traditional ways.

For these products "there is no away." For the people involved in this effort, the illusion that the waste created by these products can be hidden or exported has been abandoned. The problem has been faced, and solutions are emerging. Model systems have producers, distributors and consumers sharing responsibility for stewardship of these products. Producers are creating infrastructures for taking back retired products, and are designing new products for easier disassembly and recycling. Retailers are serving as collection points for consumers to drop off used products. Consumers are taking responsibility for returning the used products to collection points rather than throwing them out with the trash. Entrepreneurial recycling companies are performing the actual disassembly and sorting of parts and materials contained in these products. Government agencies serve as coordinators and supporters of all of this activity.

Symbolically this program represents more than the physical removal of some electronics hardware from the waste stream. It is a model of collective action taken with consciousness of an environmental threat. The sharing of responsibility among stakeholders may make the consciousness more bearable. One party's acknowledgment makes it more difficult for other parties to slip into denial.

Similarly, Ostrom (1990) found examples throughout history of communities that successfully governed common resources in a sustainable way. They developed rules that allowed the resource, such as water for irrigation, to be used by stakeholders without being used up. These examples are inspiring because the communities managed their resources sustainably for long periods of time without violent conflict and without government regulations and enforcement. These communities were driven by the reality that to fail to govern the resource sustainably would result in a "tragedy of the commons" with critical shortages for all. We find hope for the future in such collaborative efforts where responsibility for an environmental

problem is shared among producers and consumers, governments and citizens, neighborhoods and international bodies.

It is now clear, in a terrifying way, that our uncritical development of technology can have grave unintended consequences. As we continue to react to the horrible attacks of September 11th and prepare for possible future terrorists attacks, we experience a diabolical dialectic. We see that the weapons we have developed for our own protection may be used against us. Group Relations Theory points out that the feelings and attitudes we neglect, split off or deny will eventually come back to haunt us in some way or other. For example, burying toxic chemicals in landfills, once a preferred method of disposal, has turned out to be very dangerous and expensive. A more honest and thoughtful evaluation of the risks of disposing of chemicals in this way would have readily indicated that landfills were not the right place to bury dangerous chemicals. Yet we continue to produce chemicals or other toxic substances which need to be disposed of without working more diligently to find substitute substances which are less toxic for our purposes.

This is a chilling example of our ability to deny. We act like we will find a solution to these dilemmas shortly or that we can keep putting off the day of reckoning. However, numerous communities like Love Canal have already experienced the devastating consequences of not looking at the risks more honestly. The point is that we cannot allow technology to prescribe or proscribe the decisions we make about our future. We need a more critical stance towards new technological developments. We would do well to learn from the Amish rather than romanticize them. Adopting some of the Amish ways of evaluating technology would not be a bad start. If we were to think about the implications of a new technology, conduct scenario planning on potential unintended consequences and ask more if it fits with the values and beliefs

of our culture and community we would be in a more controlled relationship with new technology than we currently are. Group Relations Theory points out that the idealization of any person, movement or thing reflects our denial of the downside of that person, movement or thing. Our idealization of technology could easily lead to a greater loss of our natural environment than has already occurred.

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### **Notes**

(1) Innovations in Health Care Environmental Health and Safety, Tufts University School of Medicine, June 1998, Boston, Massachusetts, U.S.A.

(2) The Electronics Product Recovery and Recycling (EPR2) Conference and The Electronics Recycling Summit, Arlington, Virginia, USA, April, 2001.

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