

LONG TERM AND SHORT TERM MORALITIES

A primitive society evolves slowly and, at the same time, it lives from day to day: it does not possess large technosystems or sociosystems that make it possible to plan far ahead or to make long term investments. Consequently its morality tends to be of the ^{local and} short term type: it is geared to the solution of immediate problems.

As society evolves and becomes more complex, creating large sociosystems or technosystems, long term interests arise. People think not only of today's problems but of those of their entire generation, and some even extrapolate to eternity. A long term morality evolves, that often sacrifices immediacy for the illusions of eternity.

The industrialized countries are nowadays suffering a curious transformation: they contain huge sociosystems and technosystems, but the pace of social and technological change is so swift, that very long term plans and investments have become unrealistic--almost like in primitive societies. Consequently an opportunistic morality--i.e. an amorality--is evolving. The threat of nuclear annihilation has only intensified this feeling of immediacy and the wish to make the most of the present, leaving the future generations, if any, to their own devices.