

Making and Using Technology: Shifting toward Possibility and Vision

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Abstract

The problem this article addresses is that we excel at making tools and technologies, yet the things we build and how we build them are often harmful to humanity and the environment. Examples from rocket and chemical technologies show that we continue to use technologies in the wrong way. We build rockets that take us to the moon, yet we use rocket technology to build missiles that attack and kill others. We build chemical compounds to power engines, yet we use chemical technology to create pesticides that cause illnesses. This article suggests that we move beyond building and using technologies in ways that are harmful to humanity and the environment. The research aims to consider whether we can move beyond being makers. It considers whether we can better recognize the possibilities of what things can be made and how we can build and use them. The research further considers that we create visions based on those possibilities. These visions could help guide us toward pathways that are more beneficial to humankind and our planet. The article examines the concepts of possibility and vision from writers such as Thoreau, Gibran, and Huxley. The research considers literature that discusses humanity in the context of making, possibility, and vision. From this research, the article hopes to show that we can understand the possibilities in things and ourselves. Through this understanding, we may create visions that lead us to make the right things while building and using them in the right ways.

Keywords: Humanity, Homo-faber, Possibility, Vision, Technology, Maker, Thoreau, Gibran, Huxley

1. Introduction

We are makers of tools and technologies. Such a role is apparent when we simply answer our phone or drive to the store. We also make great things. For example, we build rockets that take us to the moon and send rovers to Mars. We build medicines that reduce diseases and infections, and we build chemical compounds to power engines. However, there is more to the story.

We tend to build and use things in ways that are harmful to humanity and the environment. That is, we use rocket technology to attack and kill others. During the Gulf War, hundreds of Tomahawk missiles were fired. These 20-foot computer-guided cruise missiles carry 1,000-pound warheads and make hits within a few feet of their target (Carus, 1991, p. 253; PBS, n.d.). We employ medical technology to create drugs that cause addiction and death. It is estimated that over 52,000 deaths in the United States were attributed to prescription opioid overdoses in 2015 (Haiven, 2018, p. 666). We use chemical technology to create pesticides that cause illnesses and congenital disabilities. Recent numbers indicate that about 3 billion tons of pesticides are used annually worldwide. Although beneficial to agricultural production and corporate earnings, pesticides have damaging consequences for the environment and public health (Pedroso et al., 2022, p. 17465).

This article addresses the misguided tendency to build and use things in harmful ways. It hopes to show that a pathway toward a more responsible making and use of technologies is possible. Yes, we excel at making things. But we do not always build the right things in the right way or use them in a manner that best benefits humankind.

This article describes how two key aspects of our everyday lives can be employed to help us make and use technologies more responsibly. The first is our ability to see the possibilities in the things we make. A discussion of possibilities from the viewpoints of Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty, Leibniz, and others shows the significance of our capacity to see possibilities. Here, in this article, the focus is on the possibilities of things we make and the possibilities in the world around us. The second aspect is our ability to create visions. This article discusses vision in the context of Thoreau, Gibran, and Huxley. Visions are more than ideas about something. They are the outcome of our considerations of possibilities. Here, the focus is on visions that emerge from the possibilities of things we make.

This research aims to consider how we can move beyond being merely makers. It considers how we can recognize our possibilities. That is, possibilities of how we can make and use things. The research further aims to leverage these possibilities to create visions. In the context of this article, these are visions of how we can build things and best use the things we build. However, the scope of making, possibility, and vision is wide. Accordingly, this article reduces the scope by focusing on several authors and philosophers who write in the context of possibility and vision. Within this scope, the objectives of this research are:

- 1) Investigate how we are makers of things.
- 2) Examine how we see the possibilities in the things we make.
- 3) Describe our view of the possibilities in our everyday lives.
- 4) Explore how visions emerge through our possibilities.
- 5) Describe how visions exist in our everyday lives.
- 6) Analyze the concept of vision in literary works.
- 7) Consider how we can better incorporate possibilities and visions in the technologies we make.

The methodology in this research employs an analysis of certain types of literature. That literature specifically discusses how we are makers, how we view possibilities in the things we make, and how vision emerges from our possibilities. Through this methodology and associated research, this article hopes to show that we can build and use technologies properly. That is, how we can make the right things and make and use them in the right ways.

2. We are Ancient Makers

Humans are tool makers. Our ancient ancestors began making stone tools 2.6 million years ago. About a million years later, they made more complex cutting tools known as hand axes (Stout et al., 2011, p. 1328). Developing the hand-axe was a significant point for our ancestors. The tool enabled them to crush roots, nuts, and meat into manageable morsels for children and adults. An advantage of this ancient technology was that it reduced the work required by strong teeth and jaws. This reduced need for large chewing muscles led to more space for a larger brain (Burke & Ornstein, 1997, p. 12). Thus, the technology of the hand-axe not only enabled us to change the foods we ate, but it also enabled us to change ourselves.

Those ancient tools are closely connected to our early human development. However, hand axes were not the only tools our ancestors employed. McClellan and Dorn (2006, p. 24) suggest that we owe our human development to more than ancient stone tools. In their view, ancient speech and grasping hands were also essential to human progress (McClellan & Dorn, 2006, p. 24).

Treating parts of our bodies as ancient tools is an interesting way of looking at ourselves as ancient makers. Mumford (2014, p. 382) suggests that our hands and mouths were significant in our early human growth. In other words, our everyday survival depended on our teeth, fingers, and nails. According to Mumford (2014, p. 382), these built-in tools later became a springboard for building more complex tools.

It may seem odd to view our bodies as tools. However, before we carved sharp edges onto the surfaces of stones, we used our fingers and nails to scrape hides and roots. Employing sharp stones enabled us to replace and enhance the human tools we already used. Our ancestors also used other tools. Skills can be viewed as tools. Our skills of observing and experimenting were crucial in gathering woodland plants and catching small animals needed for healing and food (Mumford, 2014, p. 384).

The philosopher Martin Heidegger discusses our human hands and their significance not only in the things we make but also in our everyday lives:

But the craft of the hand is richer than we commonly imagine. The hand does not only grasp and catch, or push and pull. The hand reaches and extends, receives and welcomes — and not just things: the hand extends itself, and receives its own welcome in the hands of others. (Heidegger, 1976, p. 16)

Humans are more than makers and users of stone implements. We have many tools in our toolbox. Some of these are built within our human selves and enable us to observe, reach out to others, and build complex technologies in today's modern world.

3. Today We are Homo Faber

Toolmaking is an integral characteristic of humankind. Hannah Arendt (2018, pp. 154, 156) describes us as homo faber — another name for people who make tools in order to build. As Arendt indicates, “the modern age defined man primarily as homo faber, a toolmaker and producer of things” (Arendt, 2018, p. 229). The writer Max Frisch employed

the concept in his novel *Homo Faber*, which portrays the grim circumstances of Walter Faber, an engineer who built technology and traveled the world (Frisch, 1984; Tönsing, 2017, p. 2).

According to Tönsing (2017, p. 2), Arendt and Frisch believed that tool-building could not be the main purpose of humanity. That is, there must be a higher purpose in toolmaking. Tönsing (2017, p. 3) suggests that this higher purpose is faith. Accordingly, he proposes a new form of humanity, a homo credente who comes from a place most extraordinary and who seeks to return to it. In another view, Braun et al. (2013, p. 37) suggest a new form of humanity in the context of synthetic biology. They suggest that as people who replicate and modify nature, we have become homo creator.

Regardless of the name we have given ourselves, we have intruded upon our world's ecosystems. We have engineered ourselves upon the land's soil, the oceans' depths, and the air we breathe. As makers, we have asserted our will against the elements of nature with reckless abandon.

Our onslaught calls for a change in how we describe ourselves and how we act. As Jonas (2009, p. 178) explains, a new way of looking at ourselves as makers is that we are preparers of what to do next. For Jonas (2009, pp. 178, 180), such a change is not directed at the individual but is instead a focus on a larger future humanity. In Jonas's view, homo faber has turned toward itself and is ready to remake itself. Here, in this article, this remaking must embrace foresight and responsibility. We start this remaking by looking at possibilities. That is, the possibilities of things we make, the things in our world, and our own selves.

4. Possibilities in the Things We Make

As a vast group of makers, humans make a large number of things. The amount becomes apparent when considering the mammoth container ships carrying consumer goods. Recent numbers show that about 80% of all the goods in the world are transported by cargo ships (Statista Research Department, 2024). Eventually, these products reach our homes or nearby stores. However, not all things we make are manufactured on assembly lines or transported for mass consumption.

Some things we make are crafted, and for Heidegger, these crafted things are valuable. They have value because they require skill and experience to make. They employ human hands and a connection to the material. They also contain possibilities. An example is shown in Heidegger's discussion of a cabinet maker's apprentice. Heidegger remarks about the possibilities of what the apprentice could make, but he also describes the possibilities of what lies within the wood itself:

If he is to become a true cabinetmaker, he makes himself answer and respond above all to the different kinds of wood and to the shapes slumbering within wood — to wood as it enters into man's dwelling with all the hidden riches of its nature. (Heidegger, 1976, p. 14)

For Heidegger, the type of wood and its grain suggest the possibilities of how the wood could be properly shaped. These intrinsic aspects of the wood are what give the wood its hidden riches. The true cabinetmaker is one who is attentive to these riches and understands the possibilities in the material.

4.1 Possibilities in Art

Artists are also makers. Like the cabinetmaker who shapes wood depending on its grain, artists also grapple with the possibilities in their artwork. For example, a cut of the chisel or a drawn line could occur with various angles and pressures. These nuances speak to the stone and paper in different ways, and the material responds in return. The technique of painting has a similar unfolding as Merleau-Ponty describes. Each brush stroke has an array of possibilities that include direction, shape, and pace:

That is why each brushstroke must satisfy an infinite number of conditions. Cézanne sometimes pondered hours at a time before putting down a certain stroke.... Expressing what exists is an endless task. (Merleau-Ponty, 2004, p. 400)

In Merleau-Ponty's description, the artist uses the paint like the woodworker uses the grain. Both accommodate the possibilities in their work. For Wiskus (2013, p. 63), each brush stroke from the painter constitutes a recentering. That is, every stroke is a new beginning of some aspect of the work. Accordingly, the possibilities of the work are constantly unfolding and arising. In a way, the artist enables the essence of created things to come about and arise (Rojcewicz, 2006, p. 43).

Sculptures also show how possibilities exist. The sculptor Ernst Barlach emphasizes possibility in his stonework (Paret, 2003, pp. 23-24). His sculptures have a roughness by design. According to Mitchell (2010, pp. 38, 40, 48), this unfinished appearance suggests that the maker and the work are one in a state of possibility. Interestingly, some researchers note that this possibility enables presences and truths to emerge from Barlach's abstractions (Hamilton & Cork, 1993, p. 188; Paret, 2003, p. 28).

Possibility pervades all we see and everything we do. More specifically in this article, possibility is in the things we make and throughout the world around us. Not surprisingly, Montague suggests that the domain of philosophy should be more focused on the possible. According to Montague (1933, pp. 6, 11), philosophy should refrain from working on the actual aspects of the world because that is the domain of science. Instead, he says, philosophy should concentrate on the possibilities in our lives and our world. In his essay, “Philosophy as Vision,” Montague (1933, pp. 18-19) remarks that philosophy should be “an enterprise of imagination whose primary function is to be the attainment of vision — vision of the possible and probable rather than proof of the actual and certain.”

4.2 Possibilities Everywhere

The pervasiveness of possibility is highlighted by the mathematician and philosopher Leibniz. For him, possibility goes beyond our daily lives and the world around us. In this sense, possibility extends to the universe and somehow beyond. As Leibniz describes, possibility exists in many universes and in a determination of ours.

Now as there is an infinity of possible universes in the ideas of God, and as only one of them can exist, there must be a sufficient reason for God’s choice, determining him to one rather than to another. (Leibniz & Strickland, 2014, pp. 115-116)

Leibniz's concepts are complex, and a complete explanation of them is beyond the scope of this article. However, we can see that the concept of possibility is a significant component in his philosophy.

In a simplistic view of Leibniz, possibilities arise from a multitude of perspectives. Indeed, each of us has our own set of perspectives. These perspectives change based on where we are and our thoughts and feelings at that moment. Leibniz describes the realm of possibilities as many different perspectives:

The same town, when looked at from different places, appears quite different and is, as it were, multiplied in perspectives. In the same way, it happens that, because of the infinite multitude of simple substances, there are just as many different universes, which are nevertheless merely perspectives of a single universe according to the different points of view of each monad. (Leibniz & Strickland, 2014, pp. 121)

The connection between possibilities and perspectives is not uncommon. In our daily lives, we realize that a change of view enables us to see new possibilities. An interesting example comes from Epstein (2019, p. 154). He describes how blinking creates a potential change in our environment. When we blink, our eyes close for a split second, and during that moment, the objects in our vision are no longer visible. Until our eyes reopen, we cannot be sure the objects will be in the same place or still exist. They have become possibilities.

The simple act of blinking emphasizes how possibilities permeate our world. Of course, in our everyday lives, that moment of blinking has little effect on our field of vision or our expectations. However, the writer Khalil Gibran imagines a different experience. In his imagination, the closing and opening of his hand highlight the possibilities of unusual occurrences and eccentric universes. In his collection of aphorisms named *Sand and Foam*, Gibran depicts a walk on a shoreline beach where possibilities come to life:

Once I filled my hand with mist.

Then I opened it and lo, the mist was a worm.

And I closed and opened my hand again, and behold there was a bird.

And again I closed and opened my hand, and in its hollow stood a man with a sad face, turned upward.

And again I closed my hand, and when I opened it there was naught but mist.

But I heard a song of exceeding sweetness.

(Gibran, 2020, p. 633)

We can look at Gibran’s possibilities in our own way. That is, we can imagine our own open hand holding the mist, then the bird, and the sad face. These imaginations are possibilities of things — things that seem incredible to us. In Gibran’s following lines, there is a different kind of possibility, which may also appear incredible. It is a possibility of ourselves:

It was but yesterday I thought myself a fragment quivering without rhythm in the sphere of life.

Now I know that I am the sphere, and all life in rhythmic fragments moves within me. (Gibran, 2020, p. 633)

Both Gibran and Leibniz offer a similar view of possibilities. That is, both depict unlimited and unexpected possibilities available to all of us. However, many of those possibilities seem unreal. In other words, they cannot be reached from our current perspective, which is constrained by the physical, psychological, and social contingencies that confine us today.

The possibility that Gibran and Leibniz describe is valuable. They show us that possibility exists everywhere and that possibility can go beyond the constraints of our culture and society. Possibility also exists in our daily living. Our everyday lives are infused with it.

5. Possibilities in Our Everyday Lives

In our hurried modern world, it is difficult to pay attention to all that goes on in our daily lives. We are inundated with information from news outlets and social media sites. Technology drives us toward more information but takes no exits off the data turnpike.

Technology limits us as humans. It may not be evident that technology constrains our possibilities, but it does so without our noticing. The vast information we receive through technology reduces our capacity to appreciate nature and the world around us. When we use technology to increase efficiency, we also use it to increase our human effectiveness. Accordingly, we become resources, or objects, in the operation of industrial and informational processes (Dreyfus, 2009, p. 30).

Marcuse (2009, p. 36) remarks that we can take control of the technology steering wheel. For Marcuse, that control comes from awareness of our urgency for consumption and instant gratification. This awareness is valuable because it creates an interesting switch — knowing how we wrongly use technology can help us use it properly. Heidegger also discusses our awareness of how we use technology. For him, this awareness promises “a new ground and foundation upon which we can stand and endure in the world of technology without being imperiled by it” (Heidegger, 1966, p. 55). Feenberg discusses technology similarly. He suggests that we should view technology in a way that unfolds the possibilities of our human selves and “opens broad possibilities of change” (Feenberg, 2009, p. 140).

Our everyday lives are infused with possibilities. At one moment, we may choose between taking a road detour or continuing to drive toward traffic. In another moment, we may find ourselves choosing between a green salad or chocolate ice cream. These everyday choices seem far removed from the cerebral possibilities that Leibniz and Gibran depicted. However, considering possibilities can be valuable in our daily lives.

In our everyday lives, we constantly are faced with possibilities. We are also forced to learn about them. We discover, as we grow older that our possibilities and realizations do not align in a linear fashion. An example of this non-linearity occurs in the passing of time and perhaps in our aging faculties. What was once a realization now becomes a possibility as the years push our realizations farther from us. In this unexpected turn, Epstein (2019, p. 304) remarks that the prism of time creates possibilities from actual occurrences.

We also learn that without possibility, our daily lives and individual selves are limited. That is, we become shackled in repetition and suppression. Epstein notes, “the best of all possible worlds is the world that is still possible; more precisely, it is the world of possibilities themselves” (Epstein, 2019, p. 308).

We may not always see the importance of possibility in our daily lives. Yet, we should realize that without possibilities, our everyday world would become boring and confining. Moreover, without understanding our possibilities, we may never create a vision of our true human potential.

6. Vision Emerges Through Our Possibilities

Vision is more than an idea about something. It is the result of our consideration of possibilities. It suggests that judgment was exercised to choose among possibilities. It indicates that experience was conferred and that such a vision could function in our everyday world. Vision works together with possibilities. The alliance enables a more complete vision to emerge.

In our everyday world, vision is an essential component of our daily lives. Our visions shape our views of the world and of who we are as humans. Yet, our everyday world also changes our visions. This change makes sense since our visions are structured by experiences and the things that are meaningful to us (Heidegger, 1982, pp. 5-6). However, what is meaningful changes — often because our physical, cultural, and social environments change. In this way, our daily routines change (Ferreira, 2011, pp. 15, 40, 62, 78). Accordingly, our everyday experiences also change, and our visions change with them.

Vision is a vital aspect of our human lives. Vision defines who we are and who we can be. Our visions give us the impetus and strength to develop artwork and a call for transformation. They enable us to declare that we are artists, dancers, or agents of change (Lingis, 1999, p. 106).

6.1 Vision in Art and Philosophy

Vision reveals itself in various forms. One form is closely associated with art. For example, when we gaze upon an artwork, we also participate in the vision that the artist infused into the work. However, through our gaze, we see the artist’s vision in our own way (Crowther, 2013, p. 133). Interestingly, art can depict impossible situations, such as flying

pigs or planets almost touching one another. Such depictions are contrary to our scientific and experiential knowledge. Yet, we react to these images, and in this way, the impossible becomes possible (Elpidorou, 2016, p. 20). Here, in this impossible artwork, an impossible vision becomes actual. In our real world, this shift from impossible to possible can benefit us where social and environmental change appears unattainable. The shift suggests that transformation is attainable where change seems implausible (Ingram, 2020, p. 109; Tate, 2018, pp. 4-5).

Another form of vision is associated with philosophy. A view of philosophy is that it improves our understanding of what we know in the world. However, not everyone agrees with that view. Some believe that philosophy should instead work toward establishing a vision of the world (Dummett, 2010, p. 10). The twentieth-century philosopher and mathematician Hilary Putnam said that vision is crucial in philosophy. In other words, philosophy needs more than just good arguments. As Putnam notes, “there is something disappointing about a philosophical work that contains arguments, however good, which are not inspired by some genuine vision” (Putnam, 1989, p. 85). William James, the nineteenth-century philosopher, psychologist, and prolific writer, remarked that vision is a crucial component of our lives. For James, each of us has our own vision of the world. More importantly, “our visions are usually not only our most interesting but our most respectable contributions to the world in which we play our part” (James, 2012, p. 8).

Indeed, different forms of vision can apply to various subject areas in our world. For example, we could create a vision to develop a condensed and job-centered training program for high school graduates. Another vision could be developing a transportation program for older adults who cannot access a store or clinic. In this article, the driving force behind creating a vision is technology. More specifically, it is a vision to build and use technology in the right ways.

We have already seen how some writers and philosophers consider the importance of vision. Next is a more detailed examination of three writers whose visions are quite different from one another. Yet, their visions were a driving force in their thoughts and writings.

7. Vision in Henry David Thoreau

Thoreau was a writer and naturalist typically known for his book *Walden*. Set near a Massachusetts woodland pond, the book chronicles his austere and solitary life in a small hut from 1845 to 1847 (Thoreau, 2013, pp. 445-447). In *Walden*, Thoreau depicts a vision that is personal and contemplative. His writing is visionary because it describes a particular way of living. It is a way of paying attention to ordinary things, a way that we seldom practice in today's modern world.

Thoreau's writing was an essential part of his spiritual practice, where pages of moonlit walks and singing frogs have a spontaneous feel and are in his own present moment. For Thoreau, this writing was an overflow of his experiences with nature that streamed onto his journal's pages (Robinson, 2004, p. 25). In the following passage, he describes the challenge of maintaining a vision in our daily lives. Here, through the imagery of a winter storm, he shows how easily we can lose our way:

Often in a snow-storm, even by day, one will come out upon a well-known road and yet find it impossible to tell which way leads to the village. . . . Every man has to learn the points of compass again as often as he awakes, whether from sleep or any abstraction. Not till we are lost, in other words not till we have lost the world, do we begin to find ourselves, and realize where we are and the infinite extent of our relations. (Thoreau, 2015, pp. 86-87)

A blanket of snow may be the cause, but so could simply waking from a dream. Thoreau shows us the ease at which we can lose our way. Our well-traveled paths have become places we no longer recognize. For Thoreau, it is in this act of losing ourselves and the world that we can find ourselves.

A vision is a pathway, a direction to move toward, a course to negotiate in our days and through our years. Each of us has our own path, which differs from anyone else's. Perhaps each of us has taken many paths in our lifetime and several at once for different angles of our visions. Thoreau describes a contrast of vision within himself:

I found in myself, and still find, an instinct toward a higher, or, as it is named, spiritual life, as do most men, and another toward a primitive rank and savage one, and I reverence them both. (Thoreau, 2015, p. 107)

We can see multiple visions in Thoreau's writing. His journals depict slices of his experiences in the woodland landscape throughout the seasons. For Peck (2005, p. 691), those depictions offer the reader various facets of Thoreau's ways of thinking and being. According to Peck, Thoreau understood that his style of piecemeal journaling offered a novel vision of reality.

In *Walden*, Thoreau's manner of writing and use of words also suggests a vision. Benoit (1971, p. 122) notes that Thoreau often wrote in descriptive and experiential ways as if he were describing his encounters at those moments. For example, in his depiction of the pond as a place of meditation, we absorb Thoreau's writing for our own space of reflection. In this sense, Thoreau does not teach us about the pond. Instead, we learn about it with him (Benoit, 1971, p.

122).

This discussion of Thoreau and vision shows that our visions can emerge from experiences in our everyday lives. It also shows that maintaining a vision can be challenging and that we may have several different visions operating simultaneously. In our modern world, these multiple visions make sense. We participate in various situations and use numerous things and technologies throughout the day. A single vision that accommodates all situations and things does not sound practical. Instead, our participation and usage would likely require several visions for specific situations, things, and technologies.

8. Vision in Khalil Gibran

Gibran also writes in a visionary style. He was born in Lebanon in 1883 and educated in Boston. His famous novel *The Prophet* was published in 1923 (Soyer, 2017, pp. 39-40). The book is a collection of poetic wisdom recounted by the prophet Almustafa, the novel's main character (Arslane, 2020, p. 13; Soyer, 2017, p. 47). In a discussion of teaching, Almustafa discloses that we must learn in our own way and that we cannot embody the vision of another as our own:

The astronomer may speak to you of his understanding of space, but he cannot give you his understanding.

The musician may sing to you of the rhythm which is in all space, but he cannot give you the ear which arrests the rhythm, nor the voice that echoes it.

.....

For the vision of one man lends not its wings to another man.

(Gibran, 2020, p. 596)

Gibran suggests that each of us must find our own understanding. He notes that we also must find our own vision since we cannot obtain understanding or vision from anyone else. For Arslane (2020, p. 11), Gibran's prophetic vision is an alternative to today's modern reasoning focused on calculation and rationality. Gibran moves us toward new possibilities, but they are not possibilities that are nearby. Instead, they exist at the edge of our horizon (Arslane, 2020, p. 11).

We can begin to see this horizon in Gibran's dialogue on God. Later, in his discussion on teaching, Gibran describes a new relationship with God:

And even as each one of you stands alone in God's knowledge, so must each one of you be alone in his knowledge of God and in his understanding of the earth. (Gibran, 2020, p. 596)

Gibran embraces the concept that it is our responsibility to find our own understanding and vision. He then extends that concept to our relationship with God. According to Arslane (2020, p. 18), Gibran re-imagines God as an always-evolving force that grows with us and that we mystically seek. The relationship with God becomes non-hierarchical and exists with us at the horizon of possibility (Arslane, 2020, pp. 26-27).

Gibran shows another facet of his visionary writing in a dialogue about space and restlessness. Here, in a discussion of houses, Almustafa speaks of a path of living. The path challenges the concepts of roots and stability:

Have you beauty, that leads the heart from things fashioned of wood and stone to the holy mountain?

Tell me, have you these in your houses?

Or have you only comfort, and the lust for comfort, that stealthy thing that enters the house a guest, and then becomes a host, and then a master?

.....

But you, children of space, you restless in rest, you shall not be trapped nor tamed.

(Gibran, 2020, p. 574)

Here, Gibran's prophetic vision is an opposition to established homes and a move toward wandering. The vision is a new way of living that emphasizes space rather than place. In challenging the concept of roots, Gibran's vision extends our horizon beyond the false limits imposed by the modern world (Arslane, 2020, pp. 28-29, 33).

This discussion of Gibran and vision shows that we must create our own visions — ones that work for our own selves. The discussion suggests that our visions may be unusual and may not conform to established modes of living. In other words, our visions may challenge existing ways of building and using things in our modern world.

9. Vision in Aldous Huxley

Huxley is best known for his book *Brave New World*. It is a vision of a dystopian future dependent on technology, consumerism, and blissful oppression. Huxley recognized that visions could change and that they are working hypotheses. Accordingly, he was able to modify his vision based on new understandings of humanity and the world (Zigler, 2015, p. 2). Huxley's vision changed throughout his career as a writer, as shown in his three novels: *Brave New World*, *Ape and Essence*, and *Island*. These visionary novels show how Huxley changed his views of our future world, moving from the dystopia of the first two novels to the utopia of the third (Zigler, 2015, p. 2).

In his early years, Huxley also published poetry collections, which provide insight into his vision. In one of his last poems, "The Yellow Mustard," published in 1941, Huxley described a day of low clouds that blanketed the landscape of a weary field:

And yet the reasons for despair
Hung dark, without one rift of blue;
No loophole to the living air
Had let the glory through.
In their own soil those acres found
The sunlight of a flowering weed;
For still there sleeps in every ground
Some grain of mustard seed.
(Huxley, 1971, pp. 165-166)

In Huxley's depiction of dark despair, the only glimmer was found on a patch of sunlit soil. The soil refers to our human minds (Watt, 1968, p. 149). The illumination is the growth within all minds, within each of us. Here, Huxley suggests that understanding does not arrive through a visitation from above but from a process within each person — from an inner vision (Watt, 1968, p. 149).

In his 1962 novel *Island*, Huxley created a fictional land of Eastern and Western influences. In a discussion between an island inhabitant and a shipwrecked visitor, Huxley imagines a connection between vision and mystical experience:

“Another thing we're just beginning to understand,” said Vijaya, “is the neurological correlate of these experiences. What's happening in the brain when you're having a vision? And what's happening when you pass from a premystical to a genuinely mystical state of mind?” (Huxley, 1962, p. 174)

Here, Huxley moves away from the dystopia of his previous novels and provides a vision of possibilities. They are possibilities of individual enlightenment and social reform (Zigler, 2002, p. 157). In short, Huxley's vision has changed. We can see this change with his utopia in *Island*, which is in the here and now. The utopia is a contrast to the false promises of future technologies in his previous novels (Deese, 2011, pp. 235-236; Matter, 1975, p. 149). For Huxley, his vision in *Island* is a change. But it is also a culmination of his lifelong consideration of solutions to our modern problems (Kennedy, 1965, p. 47; McMichael, 1968, p. 73).

Every day, we make choices. We choose one pair of shoes over another because we like the color, the attractive shape, or perhaps due to a whim we can no longer recall. We may choose visions similarly. After some reflection, we might select a particular view of the world because it suits us in a certain way, which could be hard to explain. Ultimately, we make our own choices but must live with them. As MacDonald notes:

This is why I prefer to read *Island* as positive and utopian. . . . We are always at a balancing point, at that moment of existential choosing, and the meaning of our lives will depend on what we choose to believe and to do. (MacDonald, 2001, p. 112)

MacDonald's point is well taken. Each one of us chooses the pathways we travel. We also realize that we must live with the choices we make. In a very real sense, it is a balancing act of possibilities and visions that we encounter throughout our daily lives.

This discussion of Huxley and vision shows that his vision changed in his writing career. Similarly, our own vision of what we should do and how we should do it may also change. In other words, our vision of how we build and use technology can change. That is, we can change our vision to build and use technology in ways that are not harmful to ourselves, the environment, or the world around us.

10. Conclusion

This article began by showing that we have been makers since our earliest human beginnings. It discussed possibilities in the things we make and in our everyday lives. It described how vision emerges through our possibilities. It showed how vision exists in our everyday lives and how vision is used in literary works. The article provided perspectives about the concept of vision from writers and philosophers. It showed that each writer and philosopher looked at vision differently. However, for each one, vision was a crucial component of their lives and writings.

As readers, we may reflect on these various visions. We may recognize aspects of our own visions that we have been considering for a while. Perhaps visions are emerging now from our experiences and possibilities. That is, the possibilities of the things around us and of ourselves. In our pondering, we may see that our visions are essential. We may realize that taking a path in our lives without understanding the possibilities involved or charting a course for ourselves would be foolish and likely lead to failure or disappointment.

This article showed that two million years ago, we used stool tools to cut and grind. It showed that in today's world, we are homo faber — people who make tools to build things. However, this article explained that we should do more than merely make things. That is, we should make the right things, make them in the right way, and use them properly. The article suggested that we see possibilities in the things we make and in ourselves. The article suggested incorporating those possibilities into a vision that reveals a pathway of action.

As mentioned, this article attempts to address the harmful ways that we build and use technology. It employs the concepts of possibility and vision to show that we can build and use technology better. However, there is much more to this connection between possibility, vision, and technology than can be discussed in a single article. Future research could focus on specific technologies, such as chemical technology, and how we can identify the possibilities that may arise. That research should also focus on the vision that emerges from those possibilities — a vision that is not harmful to farmers, others, and the environment.

Based on the findings in this article, we can be more than makers. We can examine the possibilities in things and in ourselves. We can create visions based on those possibilities that lead us toward making the right things and building and using them in the right ways. This vision, more than the act of making, defines our humanity. Such a vision depicts a world where technology challenges are resolved by understanding possibilities. It is a world where visions of ourselves and the environment enable humankind to flourish.

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