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Lesson 5: Sustainability and Collaboration
2/19/2007

Class Summary:

Unfortunately I was absent from this class due to illness. Thus, this journal entry will focus on a reading and my response. The thesis titled “The Tragedy of the Commons” deals with a logical approach to overpopulation and the contrast to society’s norm of exploiting the commons for individual benefit. The reader is encouraged to abandon the freedom to over breed with the consequence of sacrificing a bit of their conscience. The other articles look at corporate responsibility, ethics, and sustainability. Though they are all interesting, the remainder of this journal entry will examine the thesis essay.

Response:

“The Tragedy of the Commons” is especially thought-provoking in that it takes a mathematical approach to understanding the social problem of overpopulation. The crux of the argument is that there is no technical solution to this issue. Rather, there is must be a change in our way of thinking to achieve a near-zero population growth. The real problem I feel is that there will be major conflict with the youth surge of Asia and South America. The West is too materialized, and the Third World is too resource-deprived for these two ways of life to survive at the current growth rate. The sacrifices need to be made now on our part to avoid further social conflicts.

Analysis:

Zero population growth is possible; however, getting a world of trillions of people to buy into the notion seems unlikely. Thus, the only way for us to maintain a sustainable Earth is to start the process on a local scale, and hope the trend propagates to the rest of the developed world. There is no way for the Third World to achieve this now; however, as their technologies improve they will be able to buy into the notion when they see how the developed countries adapted to their limited resources.

Sound-bite:

“Freedom is the recognition of necessity.”