



Techno-Cultural Evolution: Cycles of Creation and Conflict

William McDonald Wallace

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Evolution has long shaped human behavior. Yet just recently have we learned that evolution based on natural selection is not the continuous process Darwin assumed. It is instead a two-part process of change and stability called punctuated equilibrium, with natural selection operating mainly on the frontiers of change.

Taking account of biology's latest understanding of evolution, it becomes clear that culture evolves by a similar process. This is important because over the past 30,000 years most human evolution and the behavioral changes that go with it have occurred in our cultures—not in our genes. Knowing the process by which culture evolves clarifies the origin of many of our current problems, both within and between cultures. The author contends that new technology drives cultural evolution much as mutations change our DNA. The problem is that technology is now coming at us so fast that it is inducing “circuit overload” in cultures all over the world, leading to conflict. Techno-Cultural Evolution, which builds on the insights of such bestsellers as Jared Diamond's *Guns, Germs, and Steel* and *Collapse*, explains how this process works—and what it means for all of us.



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