

2022 May 26 Stewart Brand - the Whole Earth pro-nuke/anti-nuke contradictions (Bloomberg Green)

Sometimes it seems that the older I get the clearer it becomes that not only are there no Platonic ideals, but no perfections of any sort, no clear-cut outlines or boundaries or definitions, only fuzzy edges, fractals blurred by myopic vision, mixed bags.

For example: the career of Stewart Brand, who excited us with his New Earth Catalog, extolling the promise of a society based on social diversity and ecological understanding, then seemed to slap us in the face with his promotion of nuclear power.

Nathaniel Bullard's piece in today's Bloomberg Green Newsletter linked below unsurprisingly, given Bloomberg's pro-business biases, points out that Brand's self-contradictions were deliberate, that he saw wearing two hats (or being two-faced) on the issue of nuclear power as a tactic.

In 2007, in response to a NYT article which reiterated the pro-nuke argument Brand had laid out in his 2005 "Environmental Heresies" piece, I wrote the following letter to the Times (which to the best of my knowledge is the only piece of my writing to have appeared there among all the news that fits to print).

Nothing in today's climate change reality gives me reason to change my mind from what I wrote then. Keeping nuke wastes safe for millennia is still at best a high-tech fantasy and practical impossibility, and the economic advantages of energy sources that unlike nukes really are renewable have been demonstrated repeatedly. But the schizoid (or is it just duplicitous) Brand-Bloomberg seesaw position still holds sway in places of power, as can be seen in the fact that pretty much every version of a Green New Deal greenwashes nuclear power and relies on nukes as a fossil fuel alternative in the unforeseeable future.

How can this be understood except as a desperate desire to keep as much as possible of the economic status quo intact, the hierarchical privilege superstructure and conning tower above water, the military-industrial rigamarole parading down Wall St.?

New York Times, 6 March 2007:

Hubris or Insightful Vision?

To the Editor:

Re "An Early Environmentalist, Embracing New 'Heresies'" (Findings, Feb. 27): Stewart Brand's brand of neo-environmentalism would have us believe that there is always a technological fix for the messes of industrial urbanization, that some backyards (unlike those in Marin County, Calif.) are suitable for the dumping of nuclear and chemical wastes, that ecological sustainability and limits to growth are just romantic myths; in short, that we humans, "as gods," are above the merely natural.

His path from Merry Prankster to techno-wizard will be familiar to many a '60s ex-radical born

again as a neo-con, as well as those familiar with the earmarks of hubris.

Michael Gregory

McNeal, Ariz.

Stewart Brand, Environmental Heresies," MIT Technology Review (May 2005)

<https://www.technologyreview.com/2005/05/01/231115/environmental-heresies-2/>

https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-05-26/why-stewart-brand-is-a-1960s-thinker-for-the-climate-era?cmpid=BBD052622_GREENDAILY&utm_medium=email&utm_source=newsletter&utm_term=220526&utm_campaign=greendaily