There are two kinds of people …

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"There are two kinds of people…". Yet it always annoys me when even journalists and academics employ dichotomies that fall short almost immediately. An example: the prophets and wizards dichotomy. When discussing options to deal with technological (and in its wake economic) practices that burden the planet and threaten the sustainability of our existence, it is frequently voiced.

"Wizards" would then believe in technology. They want to tinker with technologies that will push the current problems one by one into the background. By this they do not mean that with new innovations even bigger and more disruptive problems push the problems of previous innovations into the background, which has been the harsh reality for some time now. Wizards ridicule prophets. "Prophets" would not point to solutions, but rather to the unsustainability of the way we think we should deal with the problems.

When I spoke to my love about this, she said very sharply that wizards appear in fairy tales. As soon as they get out of there, they actually turn into prophets right away. They prophesy that our technology isn't good enough yet, but just let them do some magic and everything will be fine. Although they are often not involved in technology themselves, their magic often lies in putting people at ease: "Don't be afraid of the flood, an ark is being built".

But ... with that it is their prophecies of a heaven on earth, with which they distinguish themselves from the prophets they look down on, who often (mainly?) focus on the impending or impending doom. With that, the distinction between wizards and prophets has expired. It becomes there are two kinds of prophets, realistic and fairytale prophets, who call themselves wizards. Because there are infinite futures, a realistic prophet can also be a prophet of doom, or a prophet who leads her people through the divided sea, or one of a million others. Most of them are also at least to some degree fantasist, or wizard, and thus fairy-tale character. Those who can count recognize two again …

Hunters and farmers

Another nice example is the dichotomy between hunters and farmers, a funny but also silly distinction if this historical distinction is used as a psychological "typology" to distinguish two types of people. "Hunters" would then be constantly on the hunt for new partners, new jobs, and new properties. "Farmers" settle down conservatively, home sweet home.

Populism with a scientific twist, which apparently makes sense and appeals to our gut feeling. A golden formula, with an implicit logical appeal to dialectics, an age-old and proven method of 'buying' knowledge through opposites such as black and white, plus and minus. However, a psychologist, for example, who meets people in the consulting room with the agitation of the hunter, or who has seen the solid-looking family man or woman struggle with restlessness, immediately sees that this typology is again a matter of limited counting skills!

Back to the wizards and prophets, who all turned out to be prophets. It should be clear to both that our planet is suffering from how we, with our culture/technology/lifestyles, take more than the planet can provide. Until now, the more technology has developed, the worse it has become. As a heuristic I often count to three. Three ways out: 1. Belief in behavioural change (Inner Development Goals) that reduces dependence on technology (keep only the most necessary in the best-thought-out variant: Detech technology), 2. Pessimism, that is knowing that things are already very wrong, but that we as humanity cannot pull the plug ourselves, so keep going and dance on the volcano and 3. Believe that we will develop technology somewhere that will really bring us heaven on earth (the Fairytale Perspective). Although I have a good imagination, I still go for 1! But am I not actually saying, like the famous joke, "there are three kinds of people, those who can count and those who can't"?