

Live Like a



Luddite

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Luddite:

- 1. A Luddite is a person who dislikes technology.*
- 2. A member of any of the bands of English workers who destroyed machinery, especially in cotton and woolen mills, that they believed was threatening their jobs (1811–16).*

Against the Poverty of Language and Thought

16 Theses on the Cell Phone

by Jason Rodgers

Fifth Estate # 390, Fall, 2013

1. Cell phones are an overpowering, ever present factor in society. A factor which has multiplied at a staggering rate.
2. They help to deal with the fear of the unknown. It is imagined that they provide for the protection of children, assuring that the child will never be stranded or outside of the watchful parental gaze. If a car breaks down, one no longer needs to risk getting a ride from a stranger—a risk which is primarily having to confront the overwhelming alienation of our community.
3. The cell phone allows the user to avoid the risk of missing the updates they are constantly bombarded with. It is simpler and more convenient than having to risk making mundane choices yourself. The user is never difficult to contact about anything, no matter how banal.
4. The cell phone fulfills the need to be hip and current. Those without mobile communications devices are constructed as being outdated, in the cultural lag, backwards. By owning a cell phone one can feel progressive and up to date.
5. The underlying motivations for cell phone ownership are

- fear and convenience. Ultimately fear avoidance and convenience are the same thing- the avoidance of ambiguous situations.
6. It is no extreme statement to say that capitalism creates false needs. Fifteen years ago cell phones were a rarity, certainly no necessity. How did we live before? They are now a need. We need it like a fix of cellular smack.
 7. The cell sell is the easiest imaginable; the consumer does it themselves. After the initial convincing, the consumer signs a contract, which they suffer monetary penalties for breaking. Once trapped, the job of persuasion is internalized by the consumer, so as to not face their contractual trap.
 8. It is now standard at many jobs, even low paying ones, to expect ownership of a mobile phone. Employers can constantly contact employees. Labor engulfs everyday life.
 9. Due to the addition of text messaging the cellular communication is trapped between orality and literacy. It has neither the improvisation and open ended nature of spoken language, nor the complexity and depth of written language.
 10. This contributes to a poverty of language. The exchange is constant, yet nearly meaningless. This poverty of language contributes to a poverty of thought.
 11. The 911 system, required by law to be included on all cell phones, allows the location of any cell phone to be triangulated, via GPS, within a few yards. The communication device becomes a tracking device. The cell is a cell.
 12. Paranoid? Maybe. After all, they can't be tracking everybody all the time; there are just too many people. Precisely the point. The 911 system fulfills the concept of the Panopticon analyzed by Michel Foucault. We know they can't be paying attention to everyone at every given

- moment. At the same time we know that they have the capability for surveillance on anyone at any given time.
13. This position causes the internalization of the control of surveillance. The oppressor is no longer a clear external force, it is now a formless totality which impersonally constrains us. This formlessness makes it difficult to remain autonomous against it; it can not be pinned down. Furthermore, the user knows that they consented.
 14. Cellular technology is transforming man into a cyborg. The technology grows more ever present. The user becomes more and more integrated into the totality. McLuhan argued that the integrated circuit and the television were extensions of the nervous system. He seems to have been premature. The cell phone is closer to the realization of this extension of the neurological system. Remember, McLuhan's often forgotten companion point, every extension is also an amputation.
 15. The cell phone is becoming a permanent extension. It is responded to nearly automatically. This interaction forms a feedback system; a cybernetic system. What thoughts are ours, in this cybernetic system? This cybernetic transformation is particularly noticeable in the case of ear pieces and other hands free devices.
 16. The question this brings up is not one of right and wrong. It is a matter of admitting that these devices cause major shifts and determining if these shifts are what we actually want. It has been pointed out to me that the picture I present may even be too optimistic.

As for my participation in these shifts, I refuse and resist.

Fool's Day

By Peter Lamborn Wilson

Since the anti-wizard who disenchanting the world was Capitalism, we must assume that Capitalism will have to vanish by evolutionary necessity in order for re-enchantment to triumph.

Is it really possible to embrace such optimism? Let's try.

An April 1, 2019 article in *The Nation*, "Warning: The Plastics Crisis is About to Get Worse," begins with a "midrange" estimate of the amount of plastic garbage that is dumped in the ocean every year—eight million tons.

The oil industry, worried about declining profits in the energy market, is using fracked oil to ramp up plastics production. To combat this menace, the Town of Woodstock, New York is contemplating a ban on plastic drinking straws. Save the sea turtles! Never mind that every single item in the local health food supermarket is packaged in plastic. Never mind that the solar panels on the roof are made largely of plastic. Onward to victory.

But before we overcome Capitalism, we will have to abolish technology. Not just plastic; but pretty much all technology—except maybe sledge hammers, which the Luddites loved and used to smash machines in the early 19th century.

Smash driverless cars. Smash leaf-blowers. Smash pharmaceuticals. Smash guided missiles. Sex robots. Vaporizers, etc, etc. Because Capitalism is based on technology. But, how can we abolish the internet? The internet is the world.

In 1968, many believed that the consciousness revolution was about to re-enchant the world thanks to LSD and anarchism. What went wrong? Why is even ecologist Bill McKibben

talking about the End of the World by 2050, if not sooner, unless consciousness somehow changes now, this instant, world-wide, all at once. Green!

Why aren't we living on permaculture, fairy-haunted communes, and singing together on the porch in the cool of the evening after a fulfilling day in the organic gardens?

Is the sludge too thick?

Is there no way back?

TECHNOLOGY: a Limit to Creativity

by **Wolfi Landstreicher**

From Willful Disobedience Volume I

Technology is a social system. In other words, it is a system of pre-arranged relationships that imposes specific types of interactions of human beings with each other and with their environment in such a way as to perpetuate the system. The development of agriculture is often equated with the rise of civilization because it is the first verifiable technological system to develop. Of course it did not develop alone. At the same time, the state, property, religion, economic exchange, cities, laws – an entire network of integrated systems and institutions developed. Taken together, these are what I mean to be civilization and the integral relationship between these institutions must be understood if we are to fight authority intelligently.

Within non-civilized societies, the cultural limits placed on creative expression are often very rigid (there is no use in venerating these societies), but they are also very few. There are still vast areas open for unconstrained individual creativity, vast areas for creating interactions with the surrounding world that are one's own, that are sources of wonder rather than repetition of the same old habitual shit. The limits probably remain so few in these societies, because social control is personal and direct, existing, for example, in kinship relationships and sexual taboos. Little thought is given in these societies to social control of the surrounding environment.

With the rise of civilization, the nature of social control underwent a qualitative change. It became impersonal and, to a large extent, indirect – controlling and shaping individuals by

controlling and shaping the environment in which they exist. While the more direct forms of this impersonal social control are the work of the state, religion, laws and education, all openly authoritarian institutions, indirect social control is the work of such subtle authorities as technology, economy and the urban environment.

Agriculture and the city both create a strict connection to a specific piece of land. Agriculture requires a specific, scheduled and socially organized interaction with this piece of land. The city takes environmental control still further, creating an artificial environment for the social purposes of defense, commerce, religion and government. Its structure enforces conformity to these purposes. The activities of individuals in such an environment are restricted to specific spaces and to specific sorts of motions and interactions.

The origin of civilization remains a realm of speculation, but its spread is within the realm of recorded history. In light of the restrictions it places on human interactions, it should come as no surprise that historical evidence indicates that it has always only spread by the use of force against the resistance of non-civilized people and that it resorted to genocide when this resistance was too strong. Even in areas where civilization had already been established, there have always been individual resisters – vagabonds treated with distrust by both peasants and city dwellers and often on the receiving end of the violence by which the law is enforced.

But against this resistance, civilization spread. In the fields and in the cities, technology developed and, with it, social control. Architecture developed to create the majestic, fear-inspiring temples to authority as well as the nondescript cubicles that house the lower classes. Economic exchange became too complex to go on without the lubricant of money and with this development, the classes of the rich and the poor were established. The impoverished classes provided

people who could be coerced into laboring for the wealthy. And what is their labor? The further development of the technology that enforces social control. Technology cannot be separated from work, nor is it without reason that each step “forward” in the development of technology has meant an increase in the amount of work necessary for social survival. As Nietzsche said, “Work is the best police”, and technology is this cop’s muscle.

Technology quite literally controls the activities of people in their daily lives. Any factory worker could tell the precise movements one is expected to make so many times each hour on the production line and how nonconformity to these motions can fuck up production. Computers and other office machines also require very specific, restricted motions of the people they use. And the technological methods of Taylorism are even applied to service work, as ten days of hectic wage slavery at Wendy’s and several years in janitorial and dishwashing jobs taught me. None of this technology decreases labor. It just reinforces the role of the worker as a passive cog in the social machine.

Even the recreational use of technology – television, computer games, recorded music and so on – is a form of social control. Without even dealing with the social history of these means of entertainment as products of work, one can easily see their role in controlling the activities of people. Through these machines, millions of people take in the ideas and images fed to them, maybe, in the case of computer games, flicking a button or moving a joy-stick in pseudo-interaction with passively ingested images. None of these passive consumers of entertainment technology are creating their own pleasures, their own interactions, their own lives. None are a threat to authority.

Technology and the civilized environment (urban, suburban and rural) have only one relationship to the creativity of the

individual: that of suppressing it. They force it into extremely narrow and confining channels which only allow for the continuing reproduction of society as an ever more controlling and limiting system. In other words, the present society has declared war on unique individuals and their creativity. Within this context, our creative expression must be largely destructive – tearing down the walls, the dams, the channels that constrain us. Destroying the system of social control, including the monstrous technological system and its urban environment which define the non-lives that most people live, is essential to our self-creation, to making our lives our own.

Suggested Further Reading:

An Invitation to Desertion by Bellamy Fitzpatrick

A Handful of Objections: A Response to a Proposal for Desertion by kidYELLOW

The Metaphysics of Technology by David Skrbina

Industrial Society And its Future by Freedom Club

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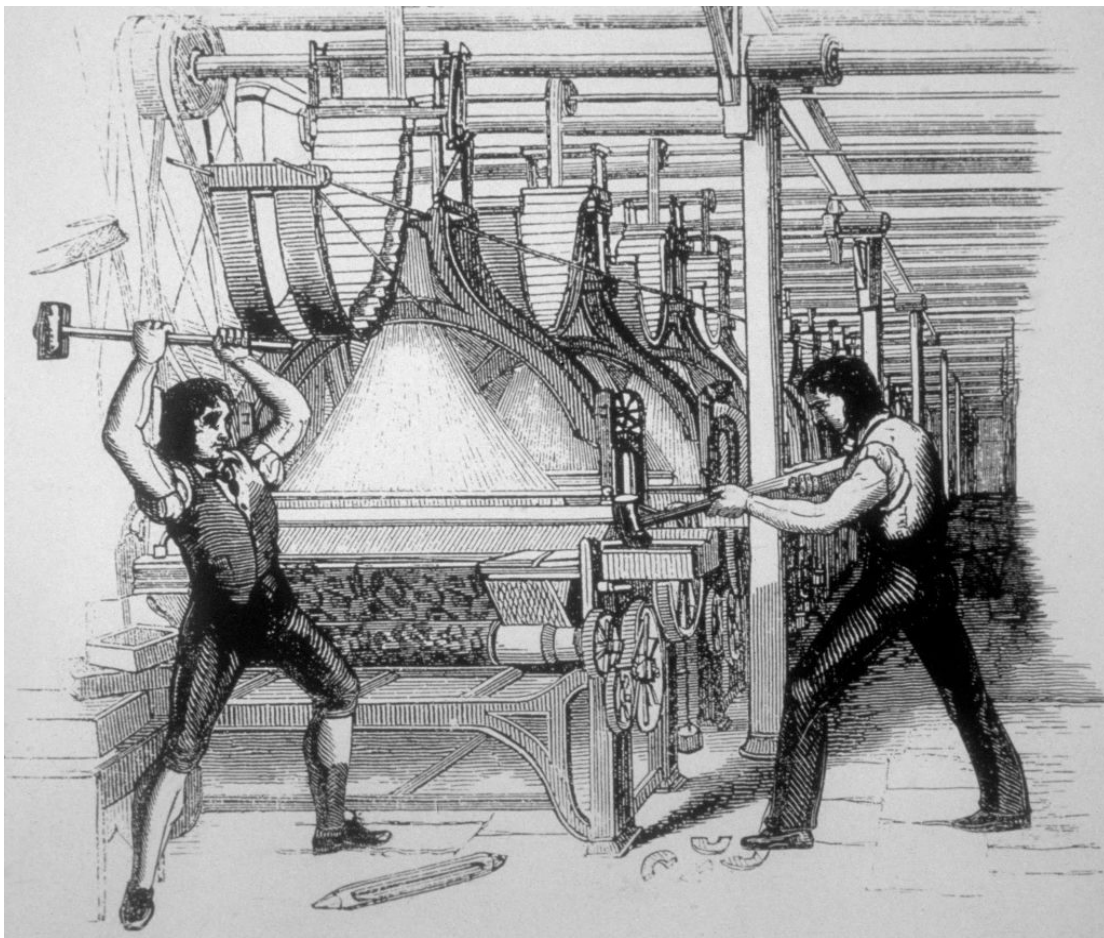
Against His-story, Against Leviathan! by Fredy Perlman

Possum Living by Dolly Freed

Desert by anonymous (readdesert.org)

In The Blistering Heat: Green Technology Will Not Save The Desert by Octillo

We Have Nothing To Say: Technology and the Economizing of Communication by Goat from Black Seed Issue 7
blackseed.anarchyplanet.org



*Should we ever be lucky enough to see the toppling of authoritarian society, technology would go with it. Without coercion and social control, there would be no one willing to do the alienating and demeaning labor required to maintain industrial society. Without wage slave shit workers and literal slave labor, it cannot be maintained. The society that would arise would certainly have some sort of tools and technology, but it would not be the sort one would generally call “tech”. It would most likely be low tech, the sort of objects that could be created by individuals and individual-scale communities. - Jason Rodgers, *Technical Authority: Ideology, the Social Construction of Technology, and Technocracy**

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2022