

## Lawler. Problem of Technology. LUDDITE READING.

### DEMOCRATIC LIBERATION THEORY

- Marxism predicts ever-increasing role of machine
- Engels predicts
- Government eventually will evolve into a worker-owned proletarian state. Advanced government allows for end of private property
- A high tech world Safeway/Target distribution center.
- If those without work do not overthrow State, then distribution Centers run by I.T will evolve.
- Engels predicts machines will do everything for us, we will have food clothing, shelter w/o need to work (except for creative work, academic research? & I.T.)
- Thus machines will bring about a virtual egalitarian state
- This machine-run egalitarian state is a true democracy
- High tech liberates us and gives us a democracy. This is DEMOCRATIC LIBERATION THEORY

In the article for our reading this week Lawler cites and discusses various criticisms of democratic liberation theory. Read the reading carefully. I give an outline here of the discussions Lawler presents. One term is important within this discussion, the term LUDDITE. **LUDDITE has come to mean any anti-technology person.**

DEMOCRATIC LIBERATION means Liberation? Freedom/ rights would be not only recognized but even positive rights are satisfied. Food, clothing shelter would be provided for everyone

Accomplishments of High Tech:

1. keep babies & moms alive
2. free us from diseases
3. painkillers
4. extend life expectancy
5. universal education (even for mentally challenged)
6. more personal choices: sexual, educational, recreational, etc.
7. you are now free to move about the country: global travel is easy

### Lawler on Democratic Liberation

### LUDDITE CRITIQUES of Democratic Liberation Theory

1. **Ignore the Socrates stuff (p 3) it is just weird:** Plato details a Utopia in The Republic, it is NOT a democracy like the Lawler source implies. Platonic Utopia is an aristocracy: only certain special people run the world. On the other hand, there are parallels between Republic of Plato and techno-liberation (democratic liberation theory), or at least the

- Platonic Republic parallels one strong interpretation of Engels: only tech overseers would have regular jobs, in this sense I.T. would seem to replace Platonic philosopher kings
2. Humans are technological or tool-making animals p. 1 In principle we should be free to accept or reject various tech developments p.2 Humans are the only beings who can create new and harder to satisfy needs via our techs.
  3. High tech societies overwhelm other societies.
  4. We cannot lose tech developments. We are stuck w/ the knowledge of our techs
    - a. Example: nuclear weapons
  5. Rapid tech development causes almost as much suffering as it alleviates
  6. Remember our discussions of rights? Rights bring duties. BUT, **Democratic liberation includes liberation from duties to others**: High tech frees us from dependence on others. Example: I am falling and I cannot get up! (Life Alert)
  7. More choices? More like: more prisons, more pollution, more police.
  8. Liberation from neighborhoods p.4. MALLS as in the generic nature of all malls: they have no flavor, no sense of different place or neighborhood or community. This is the price to be paid for universal prosperity (& democracy?) is lack of diversity.
  9. Internet opens us to others & cuts us off from the world
  10. USA 1ST TECHNOLOGICAL REPUBLIC
    - a. vote has become according to interests instead of attachments
    - b. distance of the citizens from their representatives
    - c. prefer impersonal liberty protected by national government to intrusive local government
  11. Today we understand the free pursuit of happiness under the Constitution to include
    - a. mindless self-indulgence,
    - b. stupefying diversions,
    - c. almost unlimited sexual freedom,
    - d. and even drug-induced euphoria.
  12. TECHNOLOGICAL THINKING: Heideggerian Theory of Technology p.7
    - a. Technology is not merely the tools we use but the idea of controlling the world and controlling human behavior, controlling human nature?
    - b. p.8 & 9 Thinking about how we can control technology does not free us from technological or control-oriented thinking. So democratic choice is overwhelmed by the impulse of technological thinking to conquer nature, kill God and the gods, discredit tradition, and rationalize or standardize all of human life. Everything noble and beautiful that gives human life its seriousness or dignity is regarded, literally, as nothing.
    - c. The unity of the human race at the lowest level, the complete emptiness of life, the self-perpetuation of doctrine without rhyme nor reason, no leisure, no cultivation, no withdrawal; nothing but work and recreation; no individuals and no peoples, but instead lonely crowds.
    - d. Technological thinking, by making **leisure** pointless, makes it impossible. There now seems to be a therapy or technique to rationalize every human activity, including relaxing. There is nothing that the technicians or experts cannot tell us how to do. Leisure depends on a cultivation that has its roots in non-democratic or non-technological education
  13. Democracy is bad for genuinely liberated thought because it does not provide for the education or habituation that is at the foundation of every serious human endeavor.

- a. Genuine human liberation depends on the critical examination of serious moral opinions, but in a democracy nobody defends the truth or nobility of his or her opinions.
- 14. Technology liberates us from meaningless leisure for meaningless work or recreation (which is not good in itself but merely a break from work).
- 15. Prejudice: against old people, history, parental authority, religious faith, sexual discipline, manual work, rural people and rural life, anything that is local or small or inexpensive.
- 16. We are prejudiced against settled communities, & anything that has not been uprooted by technological thinking.
- 17. We have equality and nothing else. Those who are best at manipulating others as objects will rule without restraint: a new sort of tyrannical ruling class, controlled by technological thinking, the only standards being wealth and power.
- 18. Nomads p.10. We road builders remain placeless people. Berry explains that we characteristically behave violently toward the land and particular places because from the beginning we belonged to no place. As Tocqueville says, what is new about American democracy is that restlessness has become common among ordinary people.
- 19. Techno Bohemians
  - a. The most wealthy, sophisticated, and technologically adept Americans today
  - b. Characterizations p. 12 to 15
  - c. Feeling good is more important than being good
  - d. Fanatical about their bodies: about health and safety
  - e. Aim to regulate or overorganize every moment of their own and their unfortunate children's lives
  - f. Most work-oriented or compulsively death-obsessed or risk-averse people ever.
  - g. gadget gluttons
  - h. Torture their children with all sorts of lessons,
  - i. The more perfect or risk-free we become, the more we will become paranoid about the inevitable result of our remaining imperfections.