A common complaint against technology, though perhaps not worded this way, is that it reduces movement. People move their fingers on controllers more, but their bodies less. No longer do we move to the library to write a research paper. We can have groceries delivered, call into work meetings from home, and participate in social networks but never meet our neighbors. It seems that technology allows mass stagnation.

This is in stark contrast to the old revolutionary motto, “I'd rather die on my feet than live on my knees” (citation needed). I think there are two curses upon human nature—a deep seated self-centeredness[[1]](#footnote-1) and persistent apathy. These two curses leave us stagnate—unable to progress or (to avoid the pitfall of novelty bias[[2]](#footnote-2)), to protect the status quo.

I don’t think apathy is caused by technology, but I also don’t think technology is made to help apathy. What’s left for us then is to consider what technology can do to raise people to their feet (though hopefully not to die). Perhaps it is zilch. Maybe a digital detox is the only remedy. I would like to propose an alternative. I’ll call it computational prompted movement. This approach will not

1. David Foster Wallace: “Think about it: there is no experience you have had that you are not the absolute center of. The world as you experience it is there in front of YOU or behind YOU, to the left or right of YOU, on YOUR TV or YOUR monitor. And so on. Other people's thoughts and feelings have to be communicated to you somehow, but your own are so immediate, urgent, real.” [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. See John Piper and “The Grass is Greener” parable. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)