

I thought about how the Jesus I had been raised to love – the one who preached ‘Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you’ and who prayed, on the cross, ‘Father, forgive them, they know not what they do’ – had been subtly replaced with the sort of kick-ass superman who, at his death, descends to Hell, gives the Devil a good kicking, then comes back to earth with a promise that there will be more of that in store for anyone who doesn’t follow him.

I tried to think of an alternative to these stories – one which didn’t involve violent retribution, one where

love could triumph over anger, where reconciliation could replace revenge, and where, for once, nobody had to die. But, by this stage, my ears were too full of the sound of gunfire and my brain too frazzled to think of anything at all.

So I did the only reasonable thing I could think of. I picked up a stick and carved out a big peace symbol on the sands – big enough, I hoped, for the Typhoon Eurofighter pilots to see. And then I strolled back across the beach, and went back to delivering my Quaker Quest leaflets.



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by the time you
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Johnny Citizen • Daniel Miller

The Antipocalypse: Documentation

Instructions for Radio Tower 14

1. Keep equipment powered on only during hours of operation.
2. Repeat tower code sequence at the beginning and end of every transmission.
3. Repeat every transmission twice.
4. Copy every transmission carefully and confirm accuracy during second repetition.
5. All original transmissions must be vetted by station manager.
6. Transmissions are to consist ONLY of EXACTLY that which is received from Tower 13 or vetted by station manager. NO OTHER transmission is permitted.
7. Read #6 again.

Really, we consider them more guidelines. Johnny considers them recommendations. The original bill is aged and discolored and covered with post-its with quotes defending our various theories of the world. My 20th century economists are covered with Johnny’s 20th century anarchists are covered with my 21st century technologists. “Economic progress, in capitalist society, means turmoil.” “Civilization merely hides from itself--behind a thin static scrim of rationality--the truth that only desire creates values.” “We might be on the brink of an apocalypse if, instead of poor people with suicide bombs killing middle class guys, middle-class people with suicide bombs started killing rich guys.”

Johnny really likes his order a lot more than he’ll admit, and I want to stir things up a lot more than he thinks.

Postscript

When our intrepid editor first asked me to contribute to *Movement*, I said something like: "It will probably be some incoherent mix of Lacanian psychoanalysis, ontological anarchy, and armchair technological philosophy, but sure!"

A couple of months later, things never working out exactly how one imagines them and friends Myspace-spamming friends, The Antipocalypse was born. A social network that succeeded largely because its awful aesthetic properties mirrored the awful social unniceties of the real world it replicated was spreading blink-tag spam like a rumor in a nursing home, and the irony seemed to be lost on everyone but me. I was listening to too many talks by Cory Doctorow and Bruce Sterling, and I started extrapolating.

Except that I'm not really so lapsarian. Like Doctorow and Sterling, I believe more in a singularity than an apocalypse. So I don't know exactly where all that came from.

I believe more in a singularity than an apocalypse.

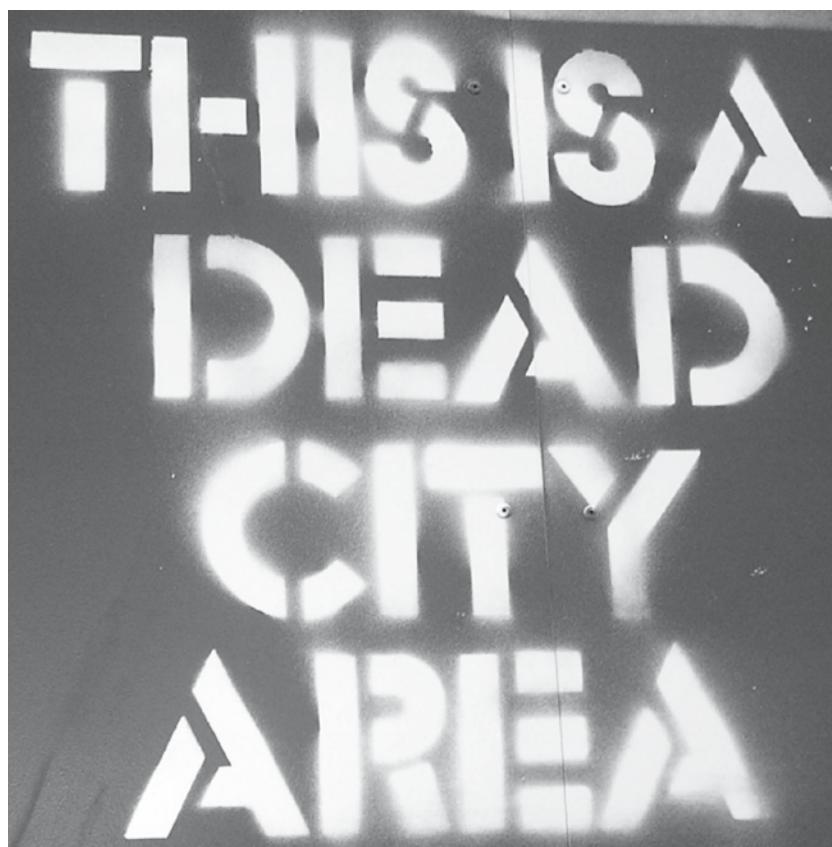
About half my clinical obsession with web technologies is driven by an ADD-fueled love of all things new and shiny. The other half comes from a fascination with how the technology allows a boolean-packet level quantification of not new behaviors, but ways-of-being that predate history. A simple way to explore what the web

was really teaching us was to imagine a world born with that knowledge but devoid of the cognition-obliterating information overload that the tools engender. What kind of slow death constraints would bring focus to the real breakthroughs of modern life? A web without servers? Markets without cash or stocks? A regression, sure, but not a dark ages. An enlightened regression.

The wildly speculative little philosophical superficia I was attempting in part two — after having narratively corner-painted myself in part one — could be brutally smashed into this bullet list, appropriate for powerpoint presentation or Twitter abuse:

- To be human is to be seeking after God.
- To be seeking after God is to be desirous of other humans.
- To be desirous of other humans is to be communicative.
- To be communicative is to be deceitful.¹

1 This might be my most unpopular premise, since the implication is that all humans lie all the time. It may be helpful if one broadens the definition of lying to



The technologies we employ to facilitate these social transactions, they so often seem to be built with the intention of removing deceit, but in the end all seem to fall on to the same bell curve. Realization of best intentions on the y axis, number of users on the x.²

The tools communicating meaning have replaced actual meaningfulness. And without actual meaningfulness we lose context. And without context we become vapid. We become an un-unified theory of everything. Just as many Christians have come to worship the text instead of the God who presumably authored it, we will continue to make attempts at tools that will give agency to what essentially amounts to some vaguely aesthetic abstraction of our desires.

Of course, this all applies to many other areas of life as well.³

manipulation, even the unintentional kind. We all communicate in an attempt to be understood, and from our own contexts and prejudices. I would take it a bit further and say that we are always trying to manipulate other humans in order to extract those bits of the Other that will validate our own existence; but I am going to take the easy way out and just say that the defense of that position is outside the scope of this piece. Read some Lacan, and feel free to disagree.

2 There is another side of that coin, however. Emergence theory (as opposed to the "emerging church", which is a completely different meaning of the word) says (very roughly) that collective intelligence is greater—or at least is capable of creating things very different from—individual intelligence, be it ant colonies or cities or the patchwork of neurons we call our brains and consciousnesses. I am a big fan of emergence and had no intention of following the opposite track with these columns.

3 In fact the paragraph prior to the one to which this footnote is attached comes from a blog post I wrote about art. Replace "tools" with "words". icanhaz.com/desires



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