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Neil Postman's Loving Resistance Fighter: A Philosophy of Communication in the Age of Technopoly

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ABSTRACT

NEIL POSTMAN'S LOVING RESISTANCE FIGHTER:

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By

Ryan P. McCullough

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Dissertation supervised by Anthony M. Wachs, PhD

This project walks the work of Neil Postman (1931-2003) into the philosophy of communication. Traditional conceptions of Neil Postman's body of work position his ideas within the traditions of media ecology, general semantics, or, more broadly, as a form of media studies and criticism. In addition, others label Postman's work, especially in *Technopoly* (1992), as pessimistic, deterministic, and/or imbibed with Luddite tendencies. This project articulates a different view and contends that Postman's scholarship, in particular his articulation of the loving resistance fighter in the final chapter of *Technopoly*, is committed to resisting the nefarious forces embedded in both technology and modernity. It shows that Postman's loving resistance fighter provides meaningful communicative practices that prevent one from falling into existential despair or acquiescing to the demands of technopoly. The loving resistance fighter's emphasis on

creating social and psychic distance from technology allows one to view technology with unclouded judgment and to see how technology becomes intertwined with the goods of modernity (progress, efficiency, and individual autonomy). Therefore, this project shows that the loving resistance fighter offers hope and the narrative ground to refuse both technology and modernity.

To move the loving resistance fighter into the philosophy of communication, this project first describes Postman's scholarly project and the roots of his media ecology. In doing so, Postman's media ecology comes into view as a philosophy of communication on language, technology, and education. This project then offers the practical reasons why we need the loving resistance fighter at this historical moment. Loving resistance becomes a legible act within the scene of technopoly because Postman heightens our awareness of technology's consequences on the human condition. The philosophy of communication's metaphor of heart identifies how the practices of the loving resistance fighter challenge the goods of modernity. However, identification of practice is not enough. To resist these goods, one must have narratives that support and sustain resistance. This project then articulates these narratives. It first discusses how writer Wendell Berry provides the narrative ground to resist the idea of the inherent goodness of progress. Berry encourages us to return to ecosystems of the past to find the resources to navigate the conditions of the present. It then demonstrates how journalist and biographer Robert Caro provides the narrative ground to resist the overvaluation of efficiency. Caro reminds us that we can do good work if we take our time and articulate our ideas through the print medium. Third, it elucidates how educator Myles Horton provides the narrative ground to resist our bad faith in individual autonomy. Horton's narrative reminds us of

the value of being in place with others and reveals how our actions with others provide us with a way to resolve the problems that confront us. Lastly, this project draws out implications for media ecology, the philosophy of communication, rhetoric, and communication/media education by offering a final plea for loving resistance.

DEDICATION

For Angela

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former debate coach, Dr. Kristine Greenwood cared. She cared about me and my success. I cannot thank her enough for helping me to learn and grow.

I want to thank the faculty in the Department of Media and Visual Arts at West Liberty University. I would not have been able to get through the Ph.D. program without their support. In particular, I would like to acknowledge my COM-Comrades, Mr. Jeff Pfister and Professor Chris Lee. I appreciate how we can work together to create a positive environment for our students. While in Duquesne's program I have had two department chairs who were gracious enough to let me build my schedule and duties around my Ph.D. work, Dr. Martyna Matusiak and Professor Brian Fencl. I also know that both of those individuals will go to bat for me in any situation.

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More than anyone else, I want to thank my wife and partner, Dr. Angela Rehbein. She exceeds.

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Anyone who practices the art of cultural criticism must endure being asked, What is the solution to the problems you describe?

(Postman, 1992, p. 181)

Chapter 1: Neil Postman's Media Ecology and the Philosophy of Communication

This project articulates Neil Postman's "Loving Resistance Fighter" as a philosophy of communication. Discursive practices which offer a home to meaning and a shape for understanding become a philosophy of communication (Arnett & Holba, 2012, p. 9). The loving resistance fighter constitutes a metonymy of communicative practices. The loving resistance fighter unfolds as a meaning creating and sustaining discourse. The loving resistance offers an interpretive stance toward technology, efficiency, tradition, (social) science, and narrative. The field of communication conventionally places the work of Neil Postman into the specific traditions of media ecology, media studies, and/or medium theory. However, since this project articulates the loving resistance fighter as a philosophy of communication, the project expands the putative value of Neil Postman within the field of communication. In addition, in a world dominated by the rational efficiency of technique (Ellul, 1964), the loving resistance fighter suggests that one should not fall into existential despair. On the contrary, the loving resistance fighter suggests that we find hope within the non-technologized narratives and symbols that surround us.

Introduction

Technology offers hope. If there exists a figure who represents the hope in the narrative offered to us by technology, it is the life Microsoft founder and former chief executive officer Bill Gates. The image of Gates, despite the rapacious business tactics, rests on the idea of nerd-cum-CEO-cum-richest man in the world-cum-global philanthropist working to making the world better. While one can quibble with this narrative, the *idea* of Bill Gates represents the notion that

those working in technology, even if they are motivated by profit, can and do make the world a better place thanks to their technological developments and commitment to putting their money to good use. Given the idea that our culture holds about Bill Gates, one might be shocked to see him say to a *New York Times* columnist, in reference to the success of his own charitable efforts, "We're in a worse place than I expected" (Wallace-Wells, 2022, para. 7). Gates's present assessment of his own success in solving the world's problems casts doubt on the hope offered by technology. How could someone with so much wealth—thanks to technology—at his disposal be so pessimistic about his own success? How has he not leveraged the technology and wealth at his disposal to make significant gains in improving lives?

On the other hand, for those with an understanding of the history and consequences of technological development, Gates's dismay at the lack of progress is not a shock whatsoever. A better life remains at the heart of the promise of technology (Postman, 1992, p. xii). Technology offers itself as a way to improve the human condition. Apple co-founder, Steve Jobs, often forwarded such a position (Isaacson, 2011). He often repeated this story, but Jobs argued that a computer would operate as a bicycle of the mind. The argument Jobs makes is that a bicycle made human movement more efficient than the movement of faster animals, unlocking our capacity for movement. Like the bicycle, Jobs argued, the computer would save humans from unnecessary labor and inefficiencies of work and unlock the creative potential of the mind to solve complex social problems (Newcomb, 2016). The creators of technologies offer these types of promises as both a sales pitch and a world view. Technology will improve the human condition. However, for those scholars who work from the tradition of media ecology (a tradition that works to understand technology and its consequences), the promise of technology is not so simple. Technologies produce environmental changes, and those environmental changes come

with unintended consequences. For media ecologist Neil Postman (1931-2003), technology always offers a Faustian Bargain; "Technology giveth and technology taketh away, and not always in equal measure. A new technology sometimes creates more than it destroys. Sometimes, it destroys more than it creates. But it is never one-sided" (1990, para. 5). Creators of technology, because they have birthed the technology, rarely see what the technology might destroy (Postman, 1992, p. 4). Gates becomes shocked at the lack of progress because technology, and the wealth it created for him offered hope. Jobs, who viewed the personal computer as a democratizing device, would likely be as shocked at the ways in which computing and social media have augmented disruptions to democracies.

Gates's response to the lack of progress would not surprise media ecologists either. Melinda French Gates and Bill Gates, in their introduction to report that explained their foundation's lack of progress in ameliorating the problems of food scarcity and gender inequality, reveal an abiding faith in progress and the ability to overcome failures. French Gates and Gates (2022) write, "[I]t might be better. Because what's also not reflected in the numbers is the potential for human ingenuity. No projection can ever account for the possibility of game-changing innovation" (paras. 8-10). The lack of progress does not sound an alarm because of the possibility of future innovations or technologies that might provide a rescue. French Gates and Gates argue that we need not despair "because of the potential for breakthroughs" (2022, para. 14). They lament the lack of progress, but they remained committed to the belief that progress is inevitable once we understand the setbacks (French Gates & Gates, 2022, para. 15). Despite the lack of success, there still remains hope in technology and technological innovation.

The faith that breakthroughs or technologies will come to save the day remains inherent to the creators of technology. Postman (1990) claimed that the "geniuses of computer

technology" will always give technology as an answer to our individual and collective problems—problems ranging from nuclear war to an impoverished spirit (para. 33). However, this faith in technology "is only the way of the technician, the fact-mongerer, the information junkie, and the technological idiot" (Postman, 1990, para. 33). Technology becomes the answer to the problems created, in part, by technology. The response of the Gates Foundation becomes all too predictable and, ultimately, disappointing because the solution points toward only one source for hope, ingenuity and technology.

Because Postman shoots down the hope we placed in technology, one might accuse him of being a pessimist or Luddite (see Anton, 2011; Cali, 2017). However, this project seeks to refute this particular view of Postman. Instead, I argue that Postman's particular strain of media ecology offers a clear-eyed analysis of technology that helps us to understand what media and technology do human communication and human relationships. His last book-length work on technology, *Technopoly: The Surrender of Culture to Technology* (1992), illustrated the deleterious consequences of technological culture—a culture that he calls technopoly—on the human condition. An uncritical read of *Technopoly* might lead to the conclusion that Postman embraces the reactionary tendencies of a Luddite, but his articulation of what he calls "the loving resistance fighter" (Postman, 1992, p. 182) offers a message of hope that can offer direction for our communicative practices and media education in our current historical moment. The hope offered by the Gates Foundation and others who employ this type of technical thinking will do little to keep us from succumbing to the demands of technology. Moreover, the Foundation's unwavering faith in progress reveals a commitment to what Arnett, Fritz, and Holba (2007) and Arnett (2012) call the secular trinity of modernity—progress, efficiency, and individual autonomy. As I also claim, Postman's loving resistance fighter helps us to refuse the goods

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offered by modernity. In total, Postman's work in *Technopoly* and, in particular, his articulation of the loving resistance fighter offers a message of hope in the age of technopoly, and, therefore, it becomes a philosophy of communication that provides a sense of meaning for communicative practices that refuse to give into technological demands and communicative practices that place hope only in of the offerings of technology.

In this opening chapter, I make three moves that offer a context for Neil Postman's work in *Technopoly*. First, I discuss the why Postman's work deserves consideration within the tradition of the philosophy of communication, despite Postman's fascination with Enlightenment values and the principles of modernity. Second, I chart Postman's intellectual trajectory leading up to the publication of *Techopoly*. Third, I offer a reading of *Technopoly* that traces the work's intellectual roots as well as the warnings and hopes offered by the text. After offering this context, I will preview the remainder of the project and discuss how I will walk the loving resistance fighter into the philosophy of communication.

Neil Postman's Theory of Media Ecology as a Philosophy of Communication

Because of the popularity of *Amusing Ourselves to Death: Public Discourse in the Age of Show Business* (1985), Neil Postman exists in the minds of many as, first and foremost, a staunch critic of television. This perception of Neil Postman is not incorrect, but it is incomplete. Certainly, in *Amusing Ourselves to Death*, Postman (1985) developed a clear argument on the ways in which television corrupts the serious intellectual discourse found in print. He argued that television turns sensible discourse into nonsense which seeks only to delight and entertain. However, in his broader written corpus, a reader will find an intellectual perspective which goes far beyond a critique of television and the culture connected to television. Language, education,

and technology writ large captivated Neil Postman, and he spent his career elucidating their challenges.

Graduate of Postman's media ecology doctoral program at New York University, Thomas Gencareilli (2006), surveyed Postman's work, and Gencarelli argues that, taken as a whole, communication scholars can view Postman's work as a "general theory of media ecology" (p. 203). In sum, the general theory of media ecology encourages scholars to think of "media *as* culture" (Gencarelli, 2006, p. 203, emphasis in original). This general theory of media ecology serves as a reminder to communication and media scholars: when thinking through the issues brought forth by media, scholars should consider the way in which a particular medium constitutes a culture. Neil Postman remained consistent on this issue throughout his career regardless of the medium. For him, television is not simply a channel of communication; it is a culture. Print is not a channel of communication; it is a culture. *Amusing Ourselves to Death* highlighted the ways in which the culture of television turns the serious and rational discourse of print culture into nonsense. Again, Postman remained concerned with the ways in which language, education, and technology *as cultures* create symbolic and sensory environments which enfranchise and disenfranchise particular modes of thought, patterns of communication, and ways of interacting.

Importantly, Neil Postman's body of work moved beyond description of media as culture. He put forth a proscription of certain media cultures and environments. Postman (2006) called himself a moralist, and he wrote, "To be quite honest about it, I don't see any point in studying media unless one does so within a moral or ethical context" (p. 63). Therefore, he lodged criticism and disapprobation of certain media and environments. Television's disruption of print constituted an unhappy development because of the way television undermined rational

thinkingF. He also disapproved of the cultural shifts brought about changes in language, education, and technology. In *Crazy Talk, Stupid Talk: How We Defeat Ourselves by the Way We Talk, and What to Do About It* (1976), he argued against the use of language which creates a culture in which so-called open communication becomes a solution to all interpersonal disagreements. Education, in an attempt to adapt to a constantly growing information environment, focused too much time and attention on making education "direct and urgent," which leads to a jettisoning of tradition (Postman, 1979, p. 129). Postman (1992) also contended that technology has become so entwined in culture that we cannot disabuse ourselves of technology's limitations and dangers. His general theory of media as culture did not report on the current conditions of language, education, and technology in a distant, even-handed way. He posed them as problems with direct consequences on the human condition.

Unquestioned and unchallenged change undergirds the problems present in media and a specific medium like language, education, or technology. Because Postman viewed himself as a moralist, he adopted a stance against the environmental and cultural changes rapidly occurring in language, education, and technology. Because he stood against change, Postman called himself a conservative (1988a, p. 104). However, his conservatism did not constitute an alignment with those on the American political right. Postman claimed "allegiance to an authentic conservative philosophy, one that seeks to preserve that which nourishes the spirit" (1988a, p. 115). Rapacious free-market capitalism championed by those on the American political right actually constitutes a form of radicalism (Postman, 1988a, p. 105). This form of free-market capitalism, which is actually a passenger in the vehicle driven by technology, maintains little or no regard for tradition. A true form of conservatism views technology (and capitalism) under suspicion.

Neil Postman's conservatism becomes a point of criticism. Even those working within the tradition of media ecology went so as far to call Postman a neo-Luddite (Strate, 2006; Anton, 2011). The term Luddite refers to individuals who adopt an obstinate or naïve stance toward technology. Put another way, labeling Postman a Luddite reduces his conservative perspective on technology to stubbornness. Some would argue that his conservative outlook constitutes nothing more than a misunderstanding of technology or a refusal to "keep up with the times." One could point to Postman's public refusal to use cruise control on an automobile as evidence of his Luddite tendencies.

In addition, Neil Postman's conservatism consisted of more than just a refusal to embrace technology with open arms. Postman's body of work sought to conserve print culture and Enlightenment ideals (Gencarelli, 2006; Strate, 2006). Postman's last book, *Building a Bridge to the 18th Century: How the Past Can Improve the Future* (1999), opens with an ode to the Enlightenment, and, as a whole, this book seeks to recover the ideals of the Enlightenment as a way to guide our orientation toward the future. Herein lies the problem of Postman's conservatism. By attempting to conserve the ideals of print culture and the Enlightenment, Postman runs the risk of championing what Charles Taylor called the "dialectic of the Enlightenment" (1989, p. 45). According to Taylor, the Enlightenment project, sought to use reason as a way to liberate ourselves from the tyranny of tradition, but the reasoning and rationality of the Enlightenment project becomes a source of oppression, just as tyrannical as tradition might have been. The oppression of Enlightenment rationality becomes uniquely problematic because it undermines the connection to community (Arnett, Fritz, & Holba 2007).

For those working within the philosophy of communication, Postman's approbation of the Enlightenment problematizes his work. The Enlightenment ideals gave rise to modernity.

Modernity privileges the secular trinity of progress, efficiency, and individual autonomy (Arnett, Fritz, & Holba, 2007; Arnett, 2012). While progress, efficiency, and individual autonomy do not constitute a prima facie problem, an overreliance on these values disrupts an "enlarged mentality" (Arendt, 1958). An enlarged mentality requires a concern for the other and community, but the individualism of modernity contains a dark side (Arnett & Holba, 2012, p. 46; Arnett, 2012). The mindset of modernity allows the individual (along with calls for individual autonomy) to run roughshod over the needs and concerns of the other and the community. Arnett (2012) succinctly argues that modernity "becomes an existential plague that haunts the human condition, demanding consistent and ongoing improvement through the new and innovative" (p. 4). By lionizing print culture and the Enlightenment, Postman lionized the concomitant values of modernity. Moreover, it was the Enlightenment which gave rise to the technological advances which Postman consistently attacks, and it would seem as though this is an inherent contradiction in Postman's media ecology.

At the same time, Neil Postman's media ecology offered a textured understanding of the media as culture. His media ecology creates meaning which extends to the disciplines of communication, media studies, education, language studies/linguistics, and many others (Strate, 2014, p. 42). His media ecology reveals to us the story of education, language, and technology; it is the story of media. For those who read Neil Postman, his media ecology provides insights to understand our current historical moment. At the same time, his media ecology provides us resources to take part in the historical moment. In this way, Postman's media ecology reveals itself as a philosophy of communication. Arnett and Holba (2012) write, "Philosophy of communication assists us in our role as a spectator in order to shape meaning for our role as a participant; we organize material as a story attentive to a given historical moment" (p. 13). His

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media ecology allows one to move beyond our role as a spectator of media, and his media ecology augments our role as a participant in media.

Another Postman student and graduate of the media ecology doctoral program at New York University, Lance Strate (1994) contends that Neil Postman was a defender of modernity in the midst of the postmodern condition. Postmodernity constitutes a condition in which we view the values of modernity and the Enlightenment project with skepticism (Lyotard, 1984). This does not mean that modernity does not have purchase. Modernity, and its attendant values embedded in the secular trinity (progress, efficiency, and individual autonomy), remains a resource for many, but modernity must now compete with other values and traditions. Within the historical moment, Strate (1994) claims that we should view Postman "as a champion of the modern in the postmodern world" (p. 162). Through his efforts to conserve print and the ideals of the Enlightenment, Postman places his stake in the ground in the midst of the postmodern condition. He stands for modernity. This leads me to the basic question guiding this project: how can philosophy of communication attendant to the postmodern condition accommodate Neil Postman's media ecology which champions Enlightenment ideals?

This project answers this question through a recovery Neil Postman's "Loving Resistance Fighter." I contend that the loving resistance fighter, originally articulated in Postman's *Technopoly* (1992), constitutes a philosophy of communication which offers a response to the excesses of modernity in the age of technopoly. Calvin Schrag (1986) posits that texture separates information from meaning. In this sense, this project offers a textured reading of the loving resistance fighter. The loving resistance fighter offers a textured response to technological culture (or technology as culture) by embracing narrative and print, and although the loving resistance fighter forms an individual response to technological culture, it is not a response

grounded in individualism. On the contrary, the loving resistance fighter stands against the unquestioned faith in efficiency, progress, and individual autonomy.

From Education to Media: Neil Postman's Intellectual Trajectory

This section describes Neil Postman's intellectual trajectory. This section surveys Neil Postman's major works at a way to track his intellectual trajectory. Neil Postman's media ecology began within the academic discipline of English education. His experiences as an educator turned his attention to language, media, and communication.

Neil Postman was born in New York City in 1931. He earned his bachelor's degree at the State University of New York at Fredonia in 1953, and he then went on to earn his master's degree in 1955 and Ed.D. in 1958, both in English education, from the Teachers College at Columbia (Saxon, 2003). In 1959, Postman commenced his teaching and research career at New York University, and he remained at NYU until his death in 2003.

Because of his background in English education, Postman's early scholarly output, most often co-authored with Charles Weingartner, focused on language, education, and/or the connection between the two. Postman called himself an educationist. He defined educationist as "a person who is seriously concerned with understanding how learning takes place and what part schooling plays in facilitating or obstructing it" (Postman, 1988b, p. 7). Consequently, Postman focused on role of language in relationship to learning. As an educationist, as someone concerned with the ways in which learning occurs, Postman explicated the ways in which language informs learning. Fundamentally, languages tells us what we know and how we know what we know; therefore, those interested in education must study language. The study of language provided insights into the ways of learning and knowing.

Importantly, Postman considered language to be a medium. When Postman was a graduate student at Columbia, he had an opportunity to meet H. Marshall McLuhan. (Postman, 1985, p. 8). Louis Forsdale, one of Postman's professors of English education at Columbia, was early advocate of McLuhan (Gencarelli, 2006, p. 202). After the publication of *The Gutenberg Galaxy* (1962) and *Understanding Media* (1964), McLuhan came to New York's Fordham University as a visiting professor during academic year 1967-1968, and McLuhan and Postman extended their relationship (Lum, 2006, p. 18). McLuhan's emphasis on communication mediums had a profound influence on Postman. Postman surmised that McLuhan's work struck a chord with him because of the Second Commandment forbid the making of graven images (Postman, 1985, p. 9). For McLuhan (1964), we cannot separate content from medium, hence the medium is the message. McLuhan was less interested with what is on television or what is on radio and more interested in what is television and what is radio. Television, radio, and other communication mediums are structuring devices for the perceived content, so it matters less what is on the medium. The structuring of the message, by the medium, is paramount to understanding the consequences of a medium. Given Postman's background in English education, it seemed natural to think of language a medium unto itself. Also following the work of Edward Sapir and Benjamin Whorf, Postman viewed language a structuring device for thought, action, and culture. Gencarelli (2006), argues that Postman's corpus of work articulated language as a technology (a human invention), a medium (an extension of human thought), and an environment (p. 242-243). We cannot isolate thought from language; consequently, language is a medium for thought.

Because language is a medium for thought, there is a clear connection to education. We cannot divorce education from language. We learn through language. Language, both print and oral, constitutes the media of education (Postman & Weingartner, 1966). As an educationist,

someone concerned with philosophy of education, Postman began to think of the connection between media, mediums, language, and education. *Teaching as a Subversive Activity* (1969), co-authored with Charles Weingartner, clarifies these connections. McLuhan's *Understanding Media* imbibes the entire text (Gencarelli, 2006. P. 211). The central claim of *Teaching as a Subversive Activity* is that the world is marked by constant and ever-present change and, importantly, schools are ill-equipped to contend with these changes. Schools do not provide students with what Postman and Weingartner call the survival skills that are necessary to cope with the ever-changing world. In developing this claim, Postman and Weingartner illustrate that the classroom is a medium. Again, the medium, as a structuring device, influences the messages contained within the medium. This idea comes from McLuhan, and McLuhan argued that any medium can constitute an environment. Postman and Weingartner move McLuhan's ideas to an educational context when they write "that a classroom is an environment and the way it is organized carries the burden of what people learn from it" (1969, p. 18). Put simply, Postman and Weingartner, by extending the ideas from McLuhan, contend that learning is fundamentally contingent upon the nature of the learning environment.

   Teaching as a Subversive Activity proved significant and marked a move in Postman's career in which he began to think about media beyond the classroom context. Although Postman would continue to write about issues related to education up until the time of his passing, *Teaching as a Subversive Activity* marked a moment in which Postman's scholarly lens moved more and more to media, specifically electronic media. Citing McLuhan, Postman and Weingartner argue that new (electronic) media create a new language different from the language grounded in orality (our natural language). These new languages require the study of new languages in new media, and studying new languages is central to a new education. Postman

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and Weingartner (1969) write, "When this idea is combined with the essential (and traditional) functions of school to develop literacy and sophistication in the languages (media) most important to students, then media study becomes critical in the new education" (p, 160). Therefore, studying education and being an educationist, for Postman, requires that one give serious attention to media. Putting it together, studying education requires studying language, since language is how we learn. We should study language as a medium of education because it structures the way in which people learn, and since electronic media has its own language, different and unique from the language grounded in the oral tradition, educationists should give serious attention to the ways in which electronic media alters our language environment, as the electronic world cannot help but creep into the classroom. In fact, Postman (1979) would go on to call television, an electronic medium, "The First Curriculum" in *Teaching as a Conserving Activity*, because television provides children an environment and medium of instruction prior to the students' entry into schools. Being an educationist, therefore, necessitates, the study of television and electronic media.

Postman would continue to call himself an educationist, but his scholarship, teaching, and public persona became increasingly associated with media, communication, and culture. Another key pivot in this shift toward the communication discipline was his 1968 address delivered to the National Council of Teachers of English titled, "What is Media Ecology?" Postman turned this address into his 1970 essay, "The Reformed English Curriculum." In this address and essay, Postman argued for a new "field of inquiry" called media ecology. Sometime during the 1960s, Marshall McLuhan uttered the phrase "media ecology" as a way to describe the environments created by media, and Postman took this phrase and turned it into a new scholarly endeavor (Gencarelli, 2006, p. 202). In "The Reformed English Curriculum," Postman took McLuhan's

utterance and defined it. Postman (1970) writes, "Media ecology is the study of media as environments" (p. 161). He claimed that others had studied media as environments prior to him, but he was "only naming it" (Postman, 1970, p. 161). He goes on to list some of the scholars he thought to have taken up the endeavor of studying media as environments. This list includes names that are considered part of the canon of media ecology, including Marshall McLuhan, Edmund Carpenter, Walter Ong, and Jacques Ellul. Media ecology, as articulated in "The Reformed English Curriculum," constitutes a field of inquiry which should replace traditional high school English classes. Postman would go on to take a much more measured stance with regard to English education in *Teaching as a Conserving Activity*; however, Postman commits to the idea of examining media as an environment. He writes, "An environment is, after all, a complex messages system which imposes on human beings certain ways of thinking, feeling, and behaving" (Postman, 1970, p. 161). Therefore, media ecology, for Neil Postman, is a way to ask questions about the media environment. Media ecologists ask questions about the ways in which media alter our perceptions of the human condition, and Postman creates a rather exhaustive list of questions posed from the perspective of media ecology.

Consequently, Postman calls media ecology a field of inquiry, and he contrasts a field of inquiry from an academic subject. He writes, "Fields of inquiry imply the active pursuit of knowledge. Discoveries. Explorations. Uncertainty. Change. New Questions. New Methods. New Terms. New Definitions." (Postman, 1970, p. 163). On the other hand, an academic subject is rather static, having established its own parameters long before students have entered the classroom. A subject, like English, is a matter of distribution (Postman, 1970, p. 163). You take well-worn terms and conduct investigations related to those terms, hence there are courses such as Composition, Shakespeare, Modern American Literature, and so forth. Media ecology does

not have or require such parameters. Postman, taking a similar stance to the one he took with Charles Weingartner in *Teaching as a Subversive Activity*, contends that a field of inquiry is much better suited to contend with a world of change. A subject is too stable to contend with change and cannot accommodate new information. A field of inquiry helps students "learn how to learn about which that which is unknown" (Postman, 1970, p. 164). Media ecology as a field of inquiry allows for new investigations, and given the rise of electronic media, it is uniquely positioned to investigate electronic media because it is not bound to the static categories of a traditional academic subject. Again, Postman will take a much more measured position related to academic subjects in *Teaching as a Conserving Activity* and, as I will discuss later, *Technopoly*.

Around the same time as the publication of *Teaching as Subversive Activity* and "The Reformed English Curriculum," Neil Postman began developing a graduate program in Media Ecology at New York University. His academic position at NYU moved from professor of English Education to program director of Media Ecology (Lum, 2006, p. 19-20). The 1971-1972 *NYU Bulletin* listed media ecology as a full doctoral program, with Neil Postman as its director (Lum, 2006, p. 20). This moment is particularly important because it established Postman as "the intellectual leader and public spokesperson of media ecology in the United States" (Lum, 2006, p. 21). In addition, media ecology moved beyond the parameters of education and English education. Even prior to establishing the program in media ecology, Postman taught graduate courses related to human and mediated communication. Therefore, even though NYU no longer offers a graduate program in media ecology, the communication discipline recognizes the term media ecology. The National Communication Association and the Eastern Communication Association both recognize the Media Ecology Association as an affiliate organization and allow presentations on media ecology into their respective conference programs. Communication

programs across the country offer undergraduate and graduate courses in media ecology. Communication theory textbooks recognize media ecology as a communication theory fitting within the tradition of communication and communication studies (see Griffin, Ledbetter, & Sparks 2019). Ecology is part of the metadiscourse of the field of communication (see Craig, 1999). To this point, Postman's intellectual and scholarly trajectory moved from English education to the communication discipline, and he followed this path because of his commitment to Marshall McLuhan's probes of media.

  Teaching as a Conserving Activity marks a turning point in the trajectory of Neil Postman's media ecology. Although its title signifies a central preoccupation with education, the text itself is a "primer" on media ecology from Postman's perspective (Gencarelli, 2006, p. 219). Postman introduces the "The Thermostatic View" of education and claims, "*Education is best conceived of as a thermostatic activity*" (Postman, 1979, p. 19, emphasis in original). Postman advances the metaphor that education is a thermostat and should function in the same way as a thermostat. A thermostat regulates temperature. If one sets his or thermostat to sixty-eight degrees Fahrenheit, then the thermostat signals the heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) unit to maintain a temperature of sixty-eight degrees Fahrenheit. If the temperature increases or decrease within a given room or building, the thermostat will ensure that the HVAC unit will always work to return the temperature to sixty-eight. If the temperature rises, the thermostat can help to provide a cooling effect. If the temperature decreases, the thermostat can help to provide a heating effect. Importantly, the thermostat seeks to offset the conditions around it. A thermostat helps to counteract hot and cold to maintain a certain temperature. It steadies the temperature in the room; it provides balance.

If one is to take the thermostatic view seriously, then balance is central to both education and media ecology. Balance creates a healthy ecosystem in which all the elements within an environment promote stability. Studying media as environments, the media ecology view, requires examination of the ways in media maintain or upset balance and stability. By studying media as environments, we can identify the points of imbalance, and the ways in which education can serve as a thermostatic corrective the imbalances. Postman (1979) writes, "[E]ducation tries to conserve tradition when the rest of the environment is innovative. Or it is innovative when the rest of the society is tradition-bound" (p. 19). With the thermostatic view in mind, education is "balance-centered" (Postman, 1979, p. 20). Under this view, education should provide a rejoinder to the culture around it. The rejoinder provides balance.

As mentioned earlier, at the time of *Teaching as a Conserving Activity*, television constituted the first curriculum for students. Once one begins to study media as environments, we recognize the structure of the environment. The television environment, its first curriculum, promotes "feeling and intuition" (Postman, 1979, p. 72). At the same time, it diminishes the importance of reasoning and analytical thought (Postman, 1979, p. 72). Because of the centrality of this first curriculum and its goal to entertain viewers (Postman, 1985), education must turn away from feeling and intuition and turn toward reason and analysis. This is education's rejoinder.

Teaching as a Conserving Activity marks a departure from *Teaching as a Subversive Activity*. In *Teaching as a Subversive Activity*, Postman and Weingartner contend that we must prepare students for a constantly changing world. In chapter eight of *Subversive Activity* Postman and Weingartner offer a series of radical changes to school curriculum. These proposals were articulated to shake educators out of the stupor produced by traditional medium of education, so

one could view their suggestions as mostly tongue in cheek. However, they ground their

proposals in the belief that we must counter the constantly changing world by committing to

changing traditional educational practices in radical ways. *Teaching as a Conserving Activity*

takes an alternative view—the thermostatic view. Education should provide balance and

homeostasis for students. Therefore, if the world is always changing, education should provide a

healthy dose of stability. If the first curriculum of television emphasizes non-analytical

thought—a contention Postman offers (1979, p. 70), then education must promote analytical

thought. I do not suggest that Postman and Weingartner deride or diminish analytical thought in

Teaching as a Subversive Activity, but they do argue for the dissolution of traditional courses and

subjects (1969, p. 138). In *Teaching as a Conserving Activity* (1979), Postman argues for a

recommitment to traditional subjects by emphasizing the ways in which subjects have developed

historically (p. 147). Put simply, *Teaching as a Conserving Activity* offers a recommitment to

traditional subjects, but not for the purposes of organization. Instead, he argues that

understanding subjects and their historical context with helps students to discern the meaning of

information presented to them by a constantly changing world. By doing so, the academic

subjects help to restore balance.

Postman's preoccupation with the information environment continues through *The

Disappearance of Childhood* (1982) and *Amusing Ourselves to Death* (1985). In *The

Disappearance of Childhood*, contends that information environment created by typographic

culture created the notion of childhood. Childhood is the result of media, and Postman views this

as a good thing. Unfortunately, the rise of electronic media, as a replacement of print media,

creates the disappearance of childhood. Print culture of the eighteenth century created childhood,

which is a humane idea that we should seek to preserve (Postman, 2006). Postman makes clear

the destructive influence of electronic media on the information environment. He writes, "Electricity makes nonsense of the kind of information that gives rise to and nurtures childhood" (Postman, 1982, p. 146-7). Although this text does not devote itself exclusively to the domain of education, *The Disappearance of Childhood* warns against the dangers of electronic media on education. The rise of television will produce a generation of teachers raised in the age of television, and as a result, these teachers will have a diminished capacity and ability to resist the influence of the electronic media (Postman, 1982, p. 152). Under the view, the rise of the electronic age places the thermostatic view of education into a precarious state. Teachers cannot offer an alternative to the electronic information environment, to the first curriculum, if they were raised in such an environment. They would have become accustomed to its structuring patterns.

     Amusing Ourselves to Death: Public Discourse in the Age of Show Business (1985) was a highly popular and influential text (Strate, 2014, p. xiii). The period after its publication marked the highpoint of Neil Postman's fame and reputation as a public intellectual with regard to media and communication (Gencarelli, 2006, p. 225). In this text, Postman offers a way in which we can understand the information environment. He offers an alteration to McLuhan's aphorism, the medium is the message. Instead, he argues that a media "are rather like metaphors, working by unobtrusive but powerful implication to enforce their special definitions of reality" (Postman, 1985, p. 10). Metaphors are revelatory because they open our understanding of complex entities (Ricoeur, 1975, p. 219). For example, technically, early Internet was system of electronics which deployed packet-switching—"breaking data or messages into units of equal size for posting through the system"—as a way of transferring data from one computer to another (Dodge & Kitchin, 2001, p. 7). Metaphors allow us to conceive of the complexities of the technical process

of packet-switching as an "Information Superhighway." Although I might disagree with "Information Superhighway" metaphor for the Internet, the example is telling. Metaphors open up ways of understanding media, and, for Postman, help us to think through issues related to culture and the information environment. He writes, "In understanding their metaphorical function, we must take into account the symbolic forms of their information, the source of their information, the quantity and speed of their information, the context in which their information is experienced" (Postman, 1985, p. 14). The medium is the message becomes the medium is the metaphor. Through metaphor, we can understand the alteration to the media environment, the ecology of media.

Postman argues in *Amusing Ourselves to Death* that entertainment is the dominant metaphor of television. In order to increase revenue, television stations need to draw the largest possible audience. In order to draw a large audience, televisions need to produce content that is entertaining; otherwise, audiences will not watch. When you place political deliberation or religious sermons on television, deliberation or sermons no longer orient themselves to policy making or edification. Instead, both fall into the trap of entertainment. This, of course, causes great concern for Postman because of what it does to the information environment. The medium of television turns everything into entertainment, and if everything turns into entertainment, what happens to policy making and moral instruction? Moreover, there are consequences for education as well. If teachers are raised in the electronic age of television, which offers an environment in which information is entertainment, what becomes of education? Educators become oriented to entertaining instead of instructing or learning.

Postman's educational philosophy, his stance as an educationalist, comes into focus. Educators must give serious attention to media, not because media makes students smarter or

dumber, but because media create very specific information environments. Language is the medium of learning. However, our access to language occurs through different mediums. A classroom based in orality allows for cooperation and social cohesion (Postman, 1992, p. 17). As mentioned earlier, if education can stress print culture, then it can foster reasoning and analytical thought. Orality allows us to reason together, and print allows us to reason by ourselves. Orality and print create learning environments or, if you will, information environments which promote reasoning and social cohesion. These values are especially important when the first curriculum of electronic media, television pervades the information environment. Education and educational philosophy, according to Postman, should do what it can to stave off the first curriculum. Education should serve as a thermostat. However, we have reached a stage in the information environment in which politics, morality, and education are conflated with entertainment. The metaphor of television, entertainment, is ubiquitous. At this point in Postman's career, he begins to think beyond electronic media and education. Now, he turns his attention to technology as a whole, a phenomenon unto itself.

From Media to Technology: Neil Postman's *Technopoly*

In this section, I elaborate on Neil Postman's thinking about technology through a reading of his work in *Technopoly*. In doing so, I summarize *Technopoly*, identify the intellectual roots of *Technopoly*, and describe the warning *Technopoly* offered. At the end of this section, I articulate the hopeful response to technopoly, the loving resistance fighter.

Technopoly Summary

Marshall McLuhan often blended the terms technology and media, using one instead of the other when referring to the same object (Gencarelli, 2006, p. 233). Postman did not make such conflations, keeping the terms media and medium separate from technology. However, in

Conscientious Objections: Stirring up Trouble about Language, Technology, and Education
(1988a), Postman moves to consider technology, not just media. *Technopoly* marks his first undertaking of technology writ large.

Paul Levinson (1988), a student of Postman and graduate of his program at NYU, claims, "All technologies embody knowledge" (p. xiv). Therefore, technology is an assemblage of human knowledge. Books, television sets, radios, smartphones, and computers embody human thought. Plato identified in *The Phaedrus* that writing was intended to embody human wisdom and memory, as opposed to an actual human body. Moreover, as an assemblage of human thought, all technology is derivative from human thought and expression.

In his previous works, Postman offered critiques of various media. In *Teaching as a Subversive Activity*, he warned us of the dangers of the contemporary articulation of education as a medium (as it was deployed at the time of its writing). In *Teaching as a Conserving Activity*, he warned us of the dangers of misusing the education medium and the television medium as a first curriculum. In *The Disappearance of Childhood*, he warned us of the ways in which television undermined our understanding of childhood, an understanding of childhood rooted in print culture. In *Amusing Ourselves to Death*, he warned us of the ways in which television undermined our traditional notions of public discourse. In *Technopoly*, Postman expands his scope of analysis to technology as a whole.

In *Technopoly*, the problem with technology does not lay within its capacity to embody human knowledge. The problem with technology emerges through technology's relationship with culture. *Teaching as a Subversive Activity*, Postman and Weingartner lamented the fact that answering questions quickly constitutes the highest form of knowledge and learning in the classroom environment. In a similar way, *Technopoly* questions whether we should consider

technology and machinery as the highest form of human knowledge. Unfortunately, Postman believes we reached this state, at least in the United States, and he comes to this conclusion by tracing the relationship between technology and culture.

Postman approaches technology from the perspective of media ecology. Media ecology moves him to view technology as an environment. He writes, "Technological change is neither additive nor subtractive. It is ecological. I mean 'ecological' in the same sense as the word is used by environmental scientists. One significant change generates total change" (Postman, 1992, p. 18). This orientation requires looking into the various ways in which introducing a new technology alters culture. As he articulated in *Amusing Ourselves to Death*, television did not constitute another communication channel from which communicators could choose. On the contrary, television altered the environment of public discourse in the United States; it shifted discourse from reason and inquiry to emotion and entertainment. In *Technopoly*, Postman upholds the view that the introduction of a new technology "does not add or subtract something. It changes everything" (Postman, 1992, p. 18). Specifically, technology shifts our ontology, epistemology, and axiology. Like Plato's condemnation of writing as a destroyer of memory and wisdom in *The Phaedrus*, Postman's media ecology leads him to conclude that technology produces changes in culture of which we are hardly noticeable at first, but our natural inclination to embrace technology has led to our subservience to technology, especially in the United States.

Herein lies the danger of our subservience to technology. Postman (1992) writes, "[T]he uncontrolled growth of technology destroys the vital sources of our humanity. It manifests a culture without a moral foundation. It undermines certain mental processes and social relations that make human life worth living" (p. xii). *Technopoly* describes the ways in which technology has infiltrated culture. Postman achieves a clear explanation of technology's infiltration by first

describing different cultures and their relationship to technology. Then, he discusses the danger of complete integration of technology into culture; this is the danger of a technopoly.

Postman classifies cultures into three types. He identifies tool-using cultures, technocracies, and technopolies. The first type of culture, the tool-using culture, as the label implies, views tools in ways that are utilitarian or symbolic (Postman, 1992, p. 23). These cultures have mostly disappeared. Postman identifies a windmill as a type of tool or technology which tool-using cultures use as a solution to a specific problem (Postman, 1992, p. 23). A windmill converts wind energy through its blades to pump water or grind (mill) grains. The windmill remains utilitarian for tool-using cultures because it does not circumvent traditions of religion and government. Pyramids and cathedrals were tantamount to remarkable engineering feats, but the Egyptians and Christians that built them deployed the technology in symbolic ways. They were constructed to serve religious rites or glorify God. They were developed to serve traditions older than the technology itself. In tool-using cultures, traditions hold sway.

He describes the second type of culture as technocracies. Technocracies are cultures in which technology begins to attack traditions, and in attacking traditions, technologies begin to threaten traditions. In a technocracy, technology is no longer a tool but a worldview. Postman (1992) claims, "And so two opposing world-views—the technological and the traditional—coexisted an uneasy tension. The technological was stronger, of course, but the traditional was there—still functional, still exerting influence, still too much alive to ignore" (p. 48). Technocracies foster the development of technology and its integration into the "thought-world" of the culture (Postman, 1992, p. 28). In a tool-using culture, a mechanical clock is useful because it helps the clergy to remember to pray. In a tool-using culture, the clock is purely a mechanical and functional reminder. In a technocracy, the clock organizes the world. Corey

Anton (2011) writes, "The modern clock, depending on clocks synchronized to each other, is mainly used for futural projection of synchronized interaction, for precise schedules and strict obeisance to the is the key issue to notice" (p. 118). Essentially, the clock allows us to think about the idea of the future and a form of cohesion based on synchronization. Conflict between the technological and traditional occurs when the clock demands that we organize the world to its demands instead of God's or another higher power. In a technocracy, a world organized by God still has cultural purchase, and the clock is not a monopoly. The clock wants to monopolize thought, but a lifeworld and thought worlds organized by God or a higher power is present and holds sway. Postman (1992) claims, "Technocracy did not entirely destroy the traditions of the social and symbolic worlds. Technocracy subordinated these worlds—yes, even humiliated them—but it did not render them totally ineffectual. In nineteenth-century America, there still existed holy men and the concept of sin" (p. 45). In the media environment of a technocracy, technology has ecological power, but other social and symbolic forces strive to achieve balance. These forces serve as a thermostat allowing for homeostasis of the thought-world.

A technopoly is the third type of culture Postman describes. A technopoly forms when the traditional forces lose their rhetorical and persuasive force, and the technical worldview takes full control of the culture. The forces of tradition cannot provide balance to the environment because thought world of technology does not allow them any real consideration. A technopoly does not make tradition "illegal," "immoral," or "unpopular" (Postman, 1992, p. 48). Instead, a technopoly pushes tradition to the periphery, making it "invisible and therefore irrelevant" (Postman, 1992, p. 48). Technopoly does this "by redefining what meant by religion, by art, by family, by politics, by history, by truth, by privacy, by intelligence, so that our definitions fit its new requirements. Technopoly, in other words, is 'totalitarian technocracy'" (Postman, 1992, p.

48). The use of the word totalitarian denotes that our subservience to technology and the technological worldview is complete. This does not mean that tradition disappears altogether. Tradition is present within a technopoly, but it has no teeth. Essentially, technology was successful in providing "convenience, comfort, speed, hygiene, and abundance" (Postman, 1992, p. 54). Because of technology's success in these domains, we no longer look to any other authority. Technology has authority in all matters of life. Take friendship as an example. In *Nicomachean Ethics* (2000), Aristotle devotes an entire book to the nature of friendship. His articulation of friendship moves forward through reason and judgement. Aristotle (2000) writes, "That then is perfect Friendship which subsists between those who are good and whose similarity consists in their goodness" (p. 141). In a technopoly, the question of a friend's moral goodness is elided because, without the conception of sin, humans are innately good, and, therefore, the moral goodness of a friend is becomes a silly question. In a technopoly, a good friend will quickly reply to a text message or email. A good friend will like your page on Facebook. A slow reply can undermine a friendship. Goodness no longer makes a good friend; speed makes a good friend. If similarity represents the quality of friendship, we can count on an algorithm to make that determination for us rather than our own judgment and reason. We acquiesce to technopoly from the jump.

Our acquiescence to technology and technical thinking within a technopoly influences the culture and environment by demanding one orientation toward information. Technopoly demands that we obtain more information because we perceive all problems as the result of a lack of information (Postman, 1992, p. 61). As Daniel Boorstin (1961) claims, we have a world of "extravagant expectations" (p. 3). We expect a world beyond reason or moderation—a world free from pain, discomfort, inconvenience, and, possibly, a world free from death. Any cursory

look at human history, one can reasonably presume that pain and discomfort are inevitable, but technopoly does conceive a world of struggle as inevitable. Because technology and technical thinking performed exceedingly well at solving problems of health, efficiency, and speed, we expect technology to solve all of our problems—even the problems, such as pain, that are inherent to the human condition. Certainly, at one point in time in the Western world, there was an information scarcity, and Western culture overcame this scarcity of information to solve myriad problems. Since other traditions were unable to solve these problems in satisfactory ways, we turn to technology and technical thinking which simply asks that we obtain more information. More information worked to solve a problem in the past, so it should work when applied to a new situation. Problems persist, which creates a perceived need for more information, new information. As a result, technopoly creates an "information glut" (Postman, 1992, p. 60). However, in technopoly, information is problematic because it has "no cultural coherence" and "has no place to go" (Postman, 1992, p. 63). Because the information has no coherence, no place to go, information has become a form of "garbage" (Postman, 1992, p. 69). Information has no meaning and becomes garbage as it becomes alienated from human purpose (Postman, 1992, p. 70). Is the human endeavor to be free of pain, discomfort, inconvenience, and death? Technopoly is ill-equipped to provide answers to these questions. Technopoly can produce more information, but it is information without meaning.

Postman's scholarly output with regard to media ecology extended and verified Marshall McLuhan's probes (Gencarelli, 2006, p. 202). In *Understanding Media*, McLuhan warns of the threat of electric technology to our literate world. Unlike fascism or communist totalitarianism, which poses an exterior threat to national identity and character, electric technology threatens the literate nature of our culture internally. McLuhan (2003) writes, "The electric technology is

within the gates, and we are numb, deaf, blind and mute about its encounter with the Gutenberg technology, on and through which the American way of life was formed" (p. 30). American culture was a culture born in the world of print and literacy, but because of the pervasiveness of electric technology, American culture is under threat. The electronic world implodes the print world.

Postman elaborates McLuhan's probe in *Technopoly*. After Postman established the parameters of our culture of technopoly, he identifies the ways in which our tools have led to a technopoly. Medical technology, with all of its successes, helped to create what Postman (1992) called "The Ideology of Machines" (p. 92). Postman's discussion of the stethoscope aptly summarizes this view. He writes, "Here we have expressed two of the key *ideas* promoted by the stethoscope: Medicine is about the disease, not the patient. And, what the patient knows is untrustworthy; what the machine knows is reliable" (Postman, 1992, p. 100, emphasis in original). This technology fundamentally alters the ways in which doctors treat patients. Doctors begin to focus on the isolation of diseases and increasingly rely on machines rather than human judgment. Recall that technologies embody human knowledge. Medical technology embodies reliability and accuracy devoid of human judgment which can be inconsistent and error-prone. Because we have let technology within the gates of medicine and the culture-at-large, we begin to associate rationality with the reliability and accuracy that are machine-bound. If we express ideas that are not linked to notions of reliability and accuracy, those ideas and claims are treated with suspicion. Moreover, we give presumption to those technologies which most accurately measure human conduct. Unfortunately, accurate and reliable measurement allows for only one type of tradition, empirical experimentation. Empirical experimentation, then, views all other methods of inquiry under suspicion.

With technological thinking within the gates thanks to medical technology, computer technology strengthens the "Ideology of the Machines." Postman (1992) claims, "What is clear is that, to date, computer technology has served to strengthen Technopoly's hold, to make people believe that technological innovation is synonymous with human progress" (p. 117). Since the time Postman wrote *Technopoly*, computer programmers and developers have significantly increased the speed and power of computer technology. This, no doubt, is concomitant with our perception of progress. Silicon Valley, California, a place where many technology-based companies call home, is the Fertile Crescent of the modern world. We view Silicon Valley as the place where technology and, in turn, culture takes shape. Internet connectivity and social media have fundamentally altered the ways people communicate. As computers take hold, Postman (1992) writes, "We may well wonder what other human skills and traditions are being lost in our immersion in computer culture" (p. 122). The past twenty-five years gave us an answer to this question. As I write, across the country and globe, one can find numerous programs designed to teach computer programming (coding). There is an imperative to code. As McLuhan indicated, America staked its entire education system on literacy (2003, p. 30). Now, coding, the language of the computer, is beginning to replace literacy and the communicative patterns based on it in the educational system. Another node which illustrates this is the push so-called STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) education. Rightly, those individuals in the humanities asked, what about us? Now, we have STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics). However, the subordinate nature of the arts is apparent. Either way, our education philosophy meets the demands, the ideology, of the computer. "The Ideology of the Machines," computer technology, is replacing our tradition of education grounded in literacy.

Moreover, beyond the medical and computer technologies, Postman (1992) illustrates the way in which "invisible technologies," the language of statistics, and "scientism" (the preeminence of the social sciences), dominate the thought-world within a technopoly. First, with regard to statistics, Postman asks readers to consider the notion of intelligence. Intelligence is an abstraction; he writes, "It is a word, not a thing, and a word of a very high order of abstraction" (Postman, 1992, p. 130). We cannot see intelligence in the same way in which we can see a physical object within the body. If I have an enlarged heart, liver, or pancreas, a physician can measure that object according to a scale of size (inches or centimeters). However, since intelligence is not a thing, a "scientist" measuring intelligence must create a scale for it, such as an IQ test. The scale and the subsequent statistics turn an abstract idea into a thing, even though it is not a thing. The scale makes intelligence measurable. Moreover, once one makes this abstract idea measurable, then we are able to rank intelligence in relation to others, but this ranking will always have to be according to a scale. Unfortunately, however, technopoly gives the ranking according to the scale the credence of objectivity. The scale is perceived to be free from error; it is accurate and reliable. Once viewed as accurate and reliable, it is given the credence of truth. IQ moves beyond the realm of measurement and into the realm of truth.

Second, the preeminence of statistics, an invisible technology that shapes our perceptions, give rise to the social sciences and, more specifically, the application of the techniques of the natural sciences to human behavior. This is scientism. The idea of the social sciences, at least as it is practiced within the United States, is that we can apply the scientific method to social phenomena. For the social scientist, the scientific method, hopefully, creates principles of social behavior, and once we understand, explain, and elucidate those principles we can organize behavior around those principles. This is the project of the Enlightenment (Lyotard, 1984).

Although technopoly is a product of the Enlightenment, it does not overlap perfectly with the ideals of the Enlightenment. Descartes, whose philosophy grounded much of the work of the Enlightenment, did not doubt the existence of God. God could (and did) coexist with Enlightenment and Enlightenment philosophies. However, technopoly does not allow other traditions. Technopoly demands faith in science and scientism which "serve as a comprehensive belief system that gives meaning to life, as well as a sense of well-being, morality, and even immortality" (Postman, 1992, p. 147). Scientism demands no higher faith than the scientific method.

In *Technopoly*, Postman reveals a final danger of the American technopoly. He calls this danger "The Great Symbol Drain" (Postman, 1992, p. 164). The Great Symbol Drain refers to "the trivialization of significant cultural symbols" by corporate America (Postman, 1992, p. 165). Here is an updated example. In the middle of the fourth inning the Washington Nationals baseball team holds the "Presidents Race" as a promotional event at every home game. During the race, men and women dressed as cartoon caricatures of the four American presidents featured on Mount Rushmore (George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Abraham Lincoln, and Theodore Roosevelt) race one another around the outfield warning track. One could certainly read this race as harmless fun during an event created to entertain us; however, reducing the author of the Declaration of Independence or the Great Emancipator to a caricature works to drain both Jefferson and Lincoln of their vitality and impact on the American narrative. Neither man was flawless, but the "Presidents Race" makes their contributions to the American narrative of little importance. In a technopoly, Lincoln's "Second Inaugural" will never be as entertaining at his performance in the "Presidents Race." The Great Symbol Drain means that when we think about Lincoln's performance in the latter instead of the former, then the vitality of Lincoln as the Great

Emancipator is lost. While Postman concedes that corporate greed allows for the deployment of significant cultural symbols for the purposes of advertising and marketing communication, "the adoration of technology" which "pre-empts the adoration of anything else" constitutes the real contributing factor to the symbol drain (Postman, 1992, p. 165). Technology asks that we only take *technology* seriously. Other symbols get in the way, and, therefore, technology (which allows for the infinite reproduction of symbols, a contributing factor to their drain) must drain them of their value. Otherwise, a culture might look to other, non-technological resources.

The ideologies of machines, invisible technologies, scientism, and The Great Symbol Drain all point to the ways in which technology undermine moral foundations and cultural vitality. Ultimately, *Technopoly* serves as a warning against totalitarian technocracy that is the American Technopoly. As a totalitarian technocracy, technopoly is tyrannical. It wields absolute power, and because it undermines humanity's vitality, it is oppressive. Technopoly places limits on the human endeavor without our affirmative consent. At the same time, technopoly offers no guiding telos other than the propagation of technology. Technopoly offers information, but we are given little guidance as to how to use it or make meaning of it or with it.

Someone outside the media ecology tradition might charge that Postman's view of technology constitutes a form of technological determinism. Lance Strate (2017b) contends that scholars within communication and other academic disciplines frequently make this accusation (p. 34). Labeling arguments grounded in media ecology, which Postman's arguments where, as technological determinism is a straw man argument—no one within the tradition argues for pure, hard technological determinism—which depends "on the negative connotations and knee-jerk reactions we tend to have with the term *determinism*, in any way, shape or form" (Strate, 2017b, p. 35). In *Technopoly*, Postman identifies technology's infiltration of culture as a historical

development (Strate, 2014, p. 37). Media ecology scholarship is not the same as the natural sciences, and media ecology does not presume the same type of cause and effect relationship as the natural sciences (Strate, 2014, p. 55-56). Scholarship within the media ecology tradition does presume that the technologies we create allow for changes which are beyond our control and prognostication (Strate, 2014, p. 56). Technological determinism suggests that technopolies are inevitable, but this is not Postman's claim. Since Postman argues for the use of non-technological sources of authority, we can conclude that Postman believes a world outside of technopoly and technological thinking is possible.

Technopoly's **Intellectual Routes**

Postman acknowledges that he is not the first person to discuss the catastrophic consequences of technology's infiltration into culture. As a work within media ecology, *Technopoly* fits best within the tradition of what is called technological studies (Strate, 2006) or the study of technology and technique as a medium (Strate, 2017b; Cali, 2017). Postman's work in *Technopoly* continues the tradition of technological studies from a media ecology perspective. Specifically, Postman's thinking on issues of technology indebts itself to Lewis Mumford (1934, 1952, 1967, 1970) and Jacques Ellul (1964, 1965, 1980, 1985, 1990). Mumford, Ellul, and Postman view technology, technique, and/or technics as a preeminent aspect of the development of the West (Kluver, 2006, p. 108). In the introduction to *Technopoly,* Postman (1992) recognizes both Mumford and Ellul's thinking to his work. (p. xii). As such, I will discuss Mumford and Ellul's impact on Postman and his work in *Technopoly*.

Neil Postman served as Christine Nystrom's advisor in the media ecology program at NYU. Her dissertation *Towards the Science of Media Ecology: The Formulation of Integrated Conceptual Paradigms for the Study of Human Communication Systems* (1973) marked the

historical account of the academic tradition of media ecology (Strate & Lum, 2006). Nystrom claims that Lewis Mumford's *Technics and Civilization* (1934) initiated media ecology, even though its publication preceded McLuhan's utterance of the phrase and Postman's publication of the term. *Technics and Civilization* offers an historical account of "the machine" which refers to "the entire technological complex" (Mumford, 1934, p. 12). This technological complex is more than any single technology or the constellation of specific machines. As a term, the machine "will embrace the knowledge and skills derived from industry or implicated in the new technics, and will include various forms of tool, instrument, apparatus and utility as well as machines proper" (Mumford, 1934, p. 12). A machine is different from a tool. A tool and a machine differ in terms of automation (Mumford, 1934, p. 10). The difference between a washboard and washing machine illustrates the distinctions. The washboard is a tool because a human manipulates clothes against it to remove dirt and grime. A contemporary household washing machine is a machine because it has parts within it which perform the function of washing separate from the human. Moreover, the washing machine is a machine because machines have "an external source of power" (Mumford, 1934, p. 11). The contemporary washing machine will not operate without electricity. Machines are also more specialized than tools. In the West, the washboard is antiquated. As a result, we have adapted other purposes for it. The washboard is now commonly used as a musical instrument in what might be generally classified as "old-time" music. A washing machine cannot perform any other functions than washing clothes. It has a single application.

Mumford, in his historical account of the machine, identifies three phases. Mumford labeled the first phase the Eotechnic phase. In the Eotechnic phase, humans crafted machines from wood, and any external source of power came from wind and water. In the paleotechnic

age, humans crafted machine from iron, along with wood, and coal powered these machines directly, without first converting coal into electricity. In the neotechnic phase, humans crafted machines from materials of all sorts, and, importantly, electricity powered machines.

Mumford fits within the tradition of media ecology because he recognized that the development of machines facilitated cultural change. For Mumford, machines have an ecological impact on culture. Although he never used the word ecological in *Technics and Civilization*, Mumford recognized that technologies and machines have consequences beyond their original intention. Mumford (1934) claims, "Many social adjustments have resulted from the machine which were far from the minds of the original philosophers of industrialism" (p. 269). Mumford claims that people like Adam Smith did not foresee the ways in which capitalism, coupled with the machine, would create new systems of inequality (Mumford, 1934, p. 269). Moreover, Mumford (1934) argues that tools require the user to know the tool, to "learn the laws of their behavior" (p. 321). Machines, one the other hand, "have a reality and an independent existence apart from the user" (Mumford, 1934, p. 322). Tools and machines shape perceptions of the user, and their impact stretches far beyond what we might normally perceive.

Postman's *Technopoly* echoes the ideas Mumford articulated. As stated earlier, in *Technopoly*, changes beget other changes. This theme runs throughout Postman's scholarship. In *Amusing Ourselves to Death* (1985), Postman claims eyeglasses "not only made it possible to improve defective vision but suggested the idea that human being need not accept as final either the endowments of nature or the ravages of time" (p. 14). The invention of the technology and our adoption of a technology has consequences on the human condition that are beyond our immediate grasp. Mumford also suggested that these changes are beyond our grasp. We cannot see their consequences, or the consequences of a machine go beyond the ways in which

traditional philosophy can comprehend. Postman offers media ecology as a way to think about the ecological impacts of a given medium and/or technology. He offers another way of viewing technological change, and Lewis Mumford fundamentally shaped this perspective.

Technopoly covers more than what we might traditionally call technology and machines. As an example, Postman's description of invisible technologies points to the various ways in which the technology of science and scientism infiltrate our thinking on the human condition. Invisible technologies make it possible to assign intelligence to a number. In addition, *Technopoly* identifies three cultures: tool-using cultures, technocracies, and technopolies. While they are similar to Mumford's phases, they are not the same, since Postman is more concerned with technology's relationship to culture. Postman's work on such matters, the relationship between technology and culture, are derivative of French social theorist, Jacques Ellul and his work in *The Technological Society* (1964). Ellul, a sharp critic of modernity, argued that *technique* has manifested itself as the dominant social force shaping the technological society in which we find ourselves. "[*T*]*echnique*", Ellul (1964) writes, "is the *totality of methods rationally arrived at and having absolute efficiency* (for a given stage of development) in *every* field of human activity" (p. xxv, emphasis in original). The word efficiency looms large in relation to *technique. Technique* offers efficiency as an end unto itself (Ellul, 1964, p. 21). In *The Technological Society*, Ellul identifies how *technique* renders human activity (government, law, science, education, and commerce) to efficiency. Here, we can see the influence of Ellul on Postman. A technopoly may very well be a culture in which *technique* is paramount. Postman, in *Technopoly*, goes to great lengths to explain how American culture succumbed to the ideas embedded in what Ellul called *technique*.

While a variety of other thinkers influenced Neil Postman, including those within the tradition of media ecology (Marshall McLuhan, Susanne Langer, Ivan Illich, and Harold Innis) and those who might be labeled as outside the tradition (Alfred Korzybski, Roman Jakobson, David Reisman, Norbert Wiener, and Louis Forsdale), Mumford and Ellul had a unique influence on Neil Postman and *Technopoly*. First, *Technopoly* brought "to fruition and the forefront Postman's preoccupation with technology (Gencarelli, 2006, p. 230). Mumford and Ellul (along with McLuhan) helped to bring Postman's focus to technology's larger consequences. This is a contradistinction from previous work. For example, *Amusing Ourselves to Death* explicated the consequences of television on our understanding of public debate. *Technopoly* examined technology and its consequences writ large. Mumford's machine and Ellul's *technique* render a view of a culture which dwells within the parameters of the machine and the parameters of *technique*. Postman give a name to these cultures, a technocracy and a technopoly. Second, Mumford and Ellul (unlike McLuhan) wrote with a general concern for the human condition. The machine and *technique* will not render happy consequences to the human condition. As Postman himself notes, Mumford and Ellul "could scarcely write a word about technology without conveying a sense of the humanistic and anti-humanistic consequences" (2006, p. 63). Mumford and Ellul had a deep concern for the deleterious influence of a culture which dwells in the machine and *technique*. Like both Mumford and Ellul, Postman considered himself a "moralist" with an eye toward whether technology and media improve or deteriorate the human condition (2006, p. 63). As a result, *Technopoly* constitutes a warning against the pull and power of the machine, of *technique*, and the tyrannies they impose (Gencarelli, 2006, p. 233). Postman carried with him Mumford and Ellul's attention to technology and ethics. This is why *Technopoly* constitutes a warning.

***Technopoly's* Warning**

    Technopoly, although heavily indebted to Mumford and Ellul, does not regurgitate their works. *Technopoly* considers *our* orientation toward technology, the machine, and *technique*. We welcome technology with open arms. For most of us, "technology *is* a friend. It makes life easier, cleaner, and longer" (Postman, 1992, p. xii, emphasis in original). The common perception is that since technology reduced our need for hard, toiling physical labor, increased our ability to stave off deadly and dreadful diseases, and increased our lifespan, it must be a source of beneficence, forever and always. Our belief that technology is our friend inclines us "to be enthusiastic about technological change, believing that its benefits will spread evenly among the entire population" (Postman, 1992, p. 11). This belief leads us to pull the machine, technology, and *technique* close. We willingly allow technology to shape the patterns of our interactions. For example, cell phones offer an opportunity to turn down interpersonal interactions by allowing us to pull them out to avoid conversations with others as the screen of the cell phone offers better entertainment than a conversation (Anton, 2011, p. 148). As technology offers more entertainment, we view it as our friend, *but* as Postman reminds us technology is both friend and foe (1992, p. xii).

    Moreover, *Technopoly* marks a turning point in Postman's thinking regarding technology, this is apparent when one looks to his treatment of technology in *Amusing Ourselves to Death*. In *Amusing Ourselves to Death*, he identifies the differences between technology and medium (1985, p. 84). Technology is equipment, so the printing press is a technology. A printing press does not do anything *per se* beyond putting ink to paper. When we account for the biases of the printing press, it becomes a medium, and the medium constitutes "the social and intellectual environment" a technology, created by a machine (1985, p. 84). *Amusing Ourselves to Death*

elegantly argues that written word and the printing press foster a social and intellectual environment that promote logic and reasoning, and because logic and reasoning became the parameters of the environment, political and public discourse in what Postman called the Age of Exposition, eighteenth and nineteenth century America, were the domains of the logic of the written word. In contrast, television, a technology, created a medium of entertainment. Consequently, political and public discourse in the Age of Television is nonsensical and absurd, especially when compared to the rationality one can find in print and oral culture.

Technopoly does not devote itself to a specific technology such as a classroom or television. This text examines all technology. Postman's conclusion is that technology, in total, coalesces to form a medium of technology. Technology is the social and intellectual environment. Our environment is technology qua technology. The technological environment creates a technopoly when the social and intellectual environment eliminates all other traditions. Reason, is subject to the reins of the technological environment. In McLuhan's (2003) words, technologies co-option of reason, myth, and magic represents a "reversal of an overheated medium" (p. 53). Technology no longer explodes; it implodes. Technology physically expanded into more and more domains of life, but McLuhan theorized that each medium has a "break boundary" (2003, p. 58). A break boundary occurs when a system changes into another system. Technology, once external and allowing for more efficient labor practices, is now internal and concomitant with labor. Put another way, technology has expanded to the limits of the physical world. Having reached that point, that break boundary, technology turns inward, or implodes. Our psychological world, or more accurately our reasoning world, subjects itself to technology. Therefore, we orient our thinking to technology. In ecological terms, we adapt to the environment.

Moreover, we embrace our adaptation, and we come to trust the machine and *technique*. We do not know what to do without them. Technology rewards us with less strenuous labor and longer life. According to Postman (1992), in exchange for these rewards, we give technology and technological thinking our "trust and obedience" (p. xii). As a result, we give technology and technological thinking more credence than common sense or other modes of reasoning. Current manifestations of psychology, sociology, and education cannot exist without technological thinking which seeks to quantify and measure human behavior (Postman, 1992, p. 13). Because we cannot exist without them, we become what McLuhan calls "gadget lovers" (2003, p. 63). However, this love is a form of self-love, narcissism. A dominant theme in McLuhan's work is that media constitute extensions of ourselves—our clothes, as a medium, is an extension of our skin, etc. McLuhan (2003) writes, "To behold, use or perceive any extension of ourselves in technological form is necessarily to embrace it" (p. 68). When we embrace our extensions of ourselves, McLuhan argues, we begin to serve those technological extensions as though they religion (2003, p. 68). Our technological bounty becomes our new religion's bounty.

When we begin to embrace our technologies and extensions as gods or religion, then other traditions will begin to decline in influence. They break boundaries and the love of technology creates an environment in which we have our technocratic totalitarianism, our technopoly. In technopoly, religion loses its symbolic power as religion and becomes a source for advertisement and spectacle (Postman, 1992, p. 165). Political discourse does not spring forth from logic and reason in order to be deployed in service of the community, rather it becomes a source of nonsensical entertainment (Postman, 1985). The humanities, the study of the human endeavor, becomes the social sciences. Social science can tell a story of the human experience but it does so without a moral center (Postman, 1988a). Human progress is synonymous with

technological development (Postman, 1992, p. 48). Our commercial life is scientific management (Postman, 1992, p. 51). Importantly, education is ill-equipped to confront the transitions wrought by technological changes (Postman and Weingartner 1969; Postman, 1979). Technology, the machine, and *technique* entered the gates of these institutions and traditions—the institutions and traditions that helped to make sense of the world in which we live. This is technopoly.

Hope in the Loving Resistance Fighter

However, all is not lost. Postman offers a way to think through the draining force of technopoly. His offered response to technopoly is not a *solution* to the problems posed by technopoly per se. To offer wholesale solutions to the problems of technopoly is tantamount to the improbable world and broken defenses that Postman implicates. Instead, Postman (1992) writes,

> No one is an expert on how to live a life. I can, however, offer a Talmudic-like principle that seems to me an effective guide for those who wish to defend themselves against the worst effects of the American Technopoly. It is this: You must try to be a loving resistance fighter. (p. 182)

The loving resistance fighter responds to the historical moment of technopoly, machine, and *technique*. Rather than embracing technology and letting technical thinking imbibe one's entire being, the loving resistance fighter keeps technology at an arm's length. By doing so, technology and the rational efficiency of *technique* seems "strange, never inevitable, never natural" to the loving resistance fighter (Postman, 1992, p. 185). Because of this, the loving resistance fighter approaches technology and technical thinking with a textured response, not immediate acceptance.

Postman embedded two notions within the loving resistance fighter. First, Postman highlights what it means to be loving. Even though disorientation pervades the American Techopoly, a loving resistance fighter should still hold America's story and America's symbols in high regard. This does not mean we should accept the stories and symbols of America without question, but it does mean that we hold the dialectical tensions of American experiment in high regard (Postman, 1992, p. 183). Second, Postman considers what it means to be a resistance fighter. A resistance fighter refuses to accept efficiency, numerical data, progress, and technological advancement as the ultimate form of human success (Postman, 1992, p. 184). At the same time, a resistance fighter battles on behalf of tradition, narrative, the human, and the rationality of common sense (Postman, 1992, p. 184). By combining these notions, Postman made it clear that the loving resistance fighter is not a Luddite view. The loving resistance fighter does not smash technology or petulantly refuse technological change. Instead, the loving resistance fighter seeks to conserve the human endeavor, and prevent technology's entrance into domains in which it does not belong, such as the sacred.

Overview of the Project

Unfortunately, Postman does little to clearly explicate the parameters of loving resistance and the acts of the loving resistance fighter. He offers only a few pages to the idea. In *Technopoly*, the loving resistance fighter functions as a message of hope in navigating the culture of technopoly, but it is a brief message. This lack of attention to loving resistance creates an opportunity to explore the parameters of loving resistance. However, media ecology and communication scholarship has not explored these parameters and has not given Postman's message of hope much attention. The collection of essays in Phil Rose's *Confronting Technopoly: Charting a Course Toward Human Survival* (2017) gives scant attention to loving

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resistance, even though this book contains a section on liberation and education. Lance Strate's

(2014) *Amazing Ourselves to Death: Neil Postman's Brave New World Revisited* reminds us of

the warnings offered by Postman, and Strate encourages us to consider what Postman suggested

to do in response to the pollution of the media environment. However, this text does not center

on loving resistance as a response. In another space, Strate (2017b) contends that media

ecology—as a whole—can and does bend toward practical concerns and activism, but he makes

no mention of loving resistance in the context of activism and media ecology. Paul Groswiler

(2015) may have given loving resistance the most scholarly attention within the pages

Explorations in Media Ecology, the journal of the Media Ecology Association, but he

synthesized Postman's loving resistance with Jacques Ellul's Christian anarchy. Groswiler's

work, however, did not treat loving resistance *as* loving resistance. Mallon Ross (2009) suggests

that loving resistance should inform media education practices but does not go into extended

detail to explain how this might occur. There exists a paucity of scholarship in this area of media

ecology and communication scholarship. In addition, there is no work connecting loving

resistance to the philosophy of communication and the secular trinity. The communicative

problems created by technopoly and the secular trinity and the hope offered by loving resistance

presents us with an opportunity to explore loving resistance and the loving resistance fighter.

Again, media ecology was not Postman's singular scholarly pursuit. Postman also

focused on education and language through his study of general semantics. Broadly speaking,

general semantics asks us to consider the role of language and the way language informs our

thoughts and actions (Hayakawa, 1972). General semantics reminds us that there is a "world of

words" and a "world of not-words" (Postman, 1988a, p. 141). Postman concerned himself with

the relationship between words and the things words represent, and the ways we abstract—"the

continuous activity of selecting, omitting, and organizing the details of reality so that we experience the world as patterned and coherent" (Postman, 1988a, p. 139)—to create the reality in which we find ourselves. Postman and the tradition of general semantics centers itself on the map-territory metaphor. Words are the map, and our physical reality is the territory. We use the maps created by words to understand the territory of the physical world. General semantics recognizes that our maps are incomplete, especially when it comes to ideas and territories that are more and more abstract. I mentioned earlier that Postman did not view intelligence as a thing; instead, the word intelligence abstracts and attempts to make more concrete a collection of behaviors and thoughts. This illustrates the general semantics precepts that the word is not the thing and that the map is not the territory. The word *intelligence* is a map intended to describe behaviors and thoughts. Postman gives us the map of the loving resistance fighter, but the territory of loving resistance remains uncharted by both Postman and other scholars within the tradition of media ecology.

Although this project is not a work of general semantics per se, my goal over the following chapters is to map the territory of loving resistance by articulating the narrative ground of the loving resistance fighter. Put simply, my goal is to write loving resistance into existence. Since you will find nothing but words over the following chapters, my mapping of loving resistance will certainly leave out some important landscapes of loving resistance. Despite this limitation, what comes into view is a loving resistance fighter who can appropriate the best elements of print culture to respond to the conditions of technopoly and the secular trinity (progress, efficiency, and individual autonomy). By linking loving resistance's navigation of technopoly through the use of the print ecosystem, loving resistance becomes a philosophy of communication, a discourse which provides meaning and understanding for human

communication within the technological landscape. In order to develop the loving resistance

fighter as a philosophy of communication, this project will proceed in the following way.

Chapter 2, A Scene for Resistance, begins to walk the loving resistance fighter into the

philosophy of communication through an exploration of *why*. In our historical moment and with

the collapse of narratives, the individual communicative agent must contend with the question of

why. The question of why remains central to the philosophy of communication, and although this

project does not seek to protect and promote the individual communicative agent, one must

consider the role of rhetoric and individual motivation. Why should one engage in loving

resistance? I contend that *Technopoly* makes a rhetorical turn and established what Kenneth

Burke (1945/1962) calls a scene-act ratio. Postman offers technopical culture as a scene that

demands that act of loving resistance to respond to the deleterious conditions created by the

medium of technology. In *Technopoly*, Postman creates a scene for resistance to the medium

created by technology and technological thinking. By creating this scene, we receive an answer

to the question of why. Why resist technopoly? The conditions of technopoly demand resistance,

but our resistance should be tempered and appropriate to the historical moment. Resistance need

not follow revolutionary impulses.

Chapter 3, The Heart of Loving Resistance, moves us beyond the why of loving

resistance considers *what* makes loving resistance. Although Postman outlined the precepts of

the loving resistance fighter in technopoly, he did little to explore the meaning of loving

resistance and its connection to practices. Postman simply forwarded somewhat vague practices

of the loving resistance fighter, but he failed to offer what shaped those practices and how those

practices inform how we communicate and interact in the world of technopoly. Consequently, I

turn to the philosophy of communication's notion of "Heart" (Arnett & Holba, 2012, p. 9).

Ultimately, Postman's description of the loving resistance fighter operates rhetorically as a metonym, a move to reduce (Burke 1945/1962, p. 503) all of the potential practices of loving resistance to a single term. Postman's reduction only provides us with a glimpse of loving resistance; therefore, in identifying the heart of loving resistance, I work to expand on the term through an interpretive exegesis informed by the philosophy of communication. Through the expansion of loving resistance, I reveal that loving resistance contains the resources necessary to respond to technopoly and the rise of individualism supported by the secular trinity, and I conclude that *who* of loving resistance can provide the narratives necessary to respond to our current media environment.

In following three chapters, I offer three loving resistance fighters. Each loving resistance fighter offers the narrative ground to resist the secular trinity that undergirds the tyranny of individualism. Chapter 4, Wendell Berry's Narrative Ground for Loving Resistance to Progress, illustrates the ways loving resistance helps us to resist the pull of progress. Wendell Berry's life and writing demonstrate a commitment to a life that does not prioritize a belief in progress, and he also warns us of the dangers inherent to our commitment to progress. In constructing this argument, I outline the relationship between technology and notion of progress. Through his poetry and nonfiction essays, we learn about Berry's distance from technology. This distance from technology allows Berry to embrace common sense and refuse the wholesale belief in technological progress. Berry also offers us a way out of the conundrum created by the cultural belief in progress. He suggests that we can move forward by accepting our own ignorance. We must acknowledge what we do not know and try not to commit harm. In addition, the refusal of progress also mean a return to ecosystems of the past. I interpret this as a call for the return to the ecosystem of print. Returning to print has productive value for communicative practices and

communication pedagogy. Through Berry's works loving resistance becomes a set of pedagogical practices to resist the forces of technopoly in the communication classroom.

Chapter 5, Robert Caro's Narrative Ground for Loving Resistance to Efficiency, discusses how we might use loving resistance to respond to the demands of efficiency. Journalist and biographer, Robert Caro, best known for his biographies of Robert Moses and Lyndon B. Johnson, crafted a working life that refused to accept efficiency. As Postman (1992) noted, technopoly and efficiency became intertwined because efficiency became a clear standard to measure the success of a given technology. The success of technology led to a belief in the value of efficiency; efficiency, as a value, makes sense in an ecology of technology. Robert Caro's (2019) *Working* articulates the ways in which one can craft a working life not centered on the idea of efficiency. Caro achieves this life—in part—because he, like Berry, works to distance himself from technology; he does not immediately embrace—and sometimes rejects—technological developments. Caro also embraces loving resistance through his commitment to narrative. In practice, Caro's commitment to research and crafting narratives explicitly works to offer an alternative view to the works of those who embrace technology and technical thinking. While Caro dos not "win" these battles, he does offer the ethos of postmodernity. In doing so, Caro's writing and working life offer us a sense of place during our moment of technopoly. A sense of place gives communicators, communication scholars, and communication and media educators the ground necessary to craft narratives that can respond to and create meaning within milieu of our digital age that demands we become more and more efficient.

Chapter 6, Myles Horton's Narrative Ground for Loving Resistance to Individual Autonomy, explicates how we might think through constraints imposed by techopoly and modernity's commitment to individual autonomy. My use of the term constraints seems

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counterintuitive when coupled with the idea of individual autonomy, since autonomy suggests that we should see to remove all constraints on individual behavior. However, individual autonomy, as I demonstrate in this chapter, places constraints and burdens on us through the loss of community. This chapter also addresses the specific role that print played in the rise of individual autonomy and individualism. Since much of this project seeks to recover the ecosystem of print, I take the time to discuss how print moved us into technopoly. Even though print moved us into techopoly, the life of educator and activist Myles Horton illustrates how we might use print to return us to a sense of community and reject the values of individualism. Horton embraces loving resistance through his commitment to the American project, community, religious narratives, and common sense. Horton embraced these concepts while rejecting many of the invisible technologies inherent to technopoly. Horton's resistance to individual autonomy rests on his belief in collective empowerment. Horton also used the print environment and reading to hone his educational philosophy and commitment to collective thinking. Ultimately, Horton's educational philosophy and a commitment to people in space together helps us to understand how we might create an environment that moves us closer together to articulate solutions to our collective problems. Through the embrace of listening, Horton's educational philosophy connects to loving resistance to dialogic ethics. It reminds us to not think about ourselves but to think about others.

Chapter 7 closes this project by offering a summary of the preceding chapters and a discussion of the limitations of the project and potential future directions for scholarly inquiry into the loving resistance fighter. I also discuss how this project contributes to various sub-disciplines within the field of communication. This projected reveals the need for additional study into the Neil Postman's loving resistance fighter. The idea of loving resistance and the

loving resistance fighter challenges and alters our understanding of media ecology, the

philosophy of communication, rhetoric, and communication/media pedagogy. I end this project

with a final plea for the need of loving resistance within the age of technopoly; loving resitance

becomes a discourse that adds meaning to our interactions with technology and with others.

Chapter 2: A Scene for Resistance

This project seeks to integrate the work of Neil Postman into the philosophy of communication. Specifically, the goal of this project is to describe Postman's conception of the loving resistance fighter as a meaningful discourse in response to the media and technological landscapes of the twenty-first century. Neil Postman stands as a central figure in media ecology, and media ecology, as a way to develop and hone a greater sensory awareness of the media and technological landscapes, recognizes that our explorations must begin *in medias res*, in the middle (Strate, 2017b, p. xi). Therefore, an articulation of the loving resistance fighter as a philosophy of communication should commence in the middle as well. For this project, beginning in the middle means articulating Neil Postman's description of the technological landscape and how the loving resistance fighter fits within and in the middle of that technological. Through an understanding of the landscape, we can begin to understand *why* the loving resistance fighter becomes necessary.

The question of *why* remains central to the philosophy of communication. *Why* gives a sense of purpose that allows for the development of communicative practices (Arnett & Holba, 2012, p. 3). The West, during the twentieth century, experienced a form of metanarrative collapse in which meaningful stories no longer held the cultural weight they once did, and as a result, the philosophical picture of existentialism developed to give meaning and purpose to the actions of an individual communicative agent (Barrett, 1958, p. 23). However, this project delimits the individual communicative agent concomitant with some modes of existentialism and seeks to restore the narrative ground for loving resistance. The loving resistance fighter provides a sense of why and offers a narrative that allows for a sense of meaning in existence and action within the context of technopoly.

Introduction

This chapter offers the narrative grounding of the loving resistance fighter. As discussed in the previous chapter, technopoly dismisses narratives that do not reify technological thinking, and technopoly encourages unreflective acceptance of technologized narratives. Aristotle (1984), in his *Poetics*, argued that we can understand individual and character motivation by understanding plot. Walter Fisher (1984) suggested that all humans can understand action and moral behavior through narratives. The very nature of technopoly, however, suggests that we have lost our collective sense of narratives (Postman, 1992). Moreover, in our contemporary digital and technological landscapes, narratives turn into mosaics of pictures and images, and these mosaics cannot give rise to a sense of meaning in the same way as narratives (Rushkoff, 2013). The current moment of what Rushkoff calls "present shock", the feeling that everything occurs immediately and simultaneously, denies the individual communicative agent the chance to make sense of the world. This creates a conundrum for the idea of loving resistance. How do we motivate and create action within individual communicative agents when they have no guiding narratives? How do we give individuals a sense of why, a sense of motivation? Why embrace loving resistance when there is seemingly no reason to do so? Technopoly's promise is that life can become cleaner, easier, and more convenient. If this is the case, why would anyone resist?

In this chapter, I explore the resources for motivation and the building of narrative for the loving resistance fighter by looking to the tradition of rhetoric. Schrag (1986) contends that a movement toward rhetoric becomes inevitable in any work of philosophy. This "rhetorical turn" acknowledges that philosophical analysis must respond to the moment in which we find ourselves (Schrag, 1986, p. 179). In the rhetorical turn, one moves away from philosophical

analysis to meet the demands of daily life. Put another way, within every utterance, there always remains the potential to influence, the potential to influence ourselves and those around us. Within the philosophy of communication, the rhetorical turn becomes inevitable. The philosophy of communication seeks to bring meaning to discourse and interpretation, and the action of bringing meaning to the act of interpretation demands rhetoric. Rhetoric becomes an inevitable consequence of the application of philosophical concepts. For this reason, fully articulating the loving resistance fighter requires an exploration of the rhetoricity of *Technopoly* (1992), and through an exploration of the rhetoricity of this text, one can discover the narrative of the loving resistance fighter.

To find the motivation and narrative for the loving resistance fighter, I turn to the work of rhetorical and literary scholar, Kenneth Burke (1897-1993). Burke's *Grammar of Motives* (1945) outlines the basic structure undergirding motivation within philosophical and rhetorical texts. In this chapter, I argue that *Technopoly* (1992) employs what Kenneth Burke (1945) calls a "scene-act" ratio in which the culture of technopoly becomes the scene and loving resistance becomes the act. Loving resistance becomes a coherent act when one recognizes the destructiveness of the technolopical culture. Without first establishing scene, we cannot move to acts of loving resistance and the actions of the loving resistance fighter; we cannot and will not resist technopoly without a scenic landscape which requires the act of loving resistance as a response. This scene of technopoly provides us with a narrative for *why* and helps to lift us out of the existential crisis which emerged in the twentieth century and continues into the twenty-first.

Articulating the scene-act ratio within *Technopoly* becomes significant for two reasons. First, the articulation of the scene-act ratio gets to the heart of the motivation of the loving resistance fighter. If Postman is correct and technology's intermingling with culture leads to

ruination, then we must act to respond to the culture of technopoly. If we want to people to respond to technopoly, then we must give reasons and motivation. The motivation for responding to technopoly elucidates the narrative ground for loving resistance. Understanding the rhetoric motivating the loving resistance fighter helps us to enact loving resistance as a philosophy of communication. Second, through an articulation of ratios we can begin to attribute a purpose to a text. In this way, the discovery of the ratio, provides an insight to Postman's purpose for writing *Technopoly*.

To establish this scene-act ratio, the rest of the chapter will proceed in the following way, first, I explicate the required stance toward technology which operates as a precursor to loving resistance; responding to technopoly demands that one pull oneself out of the culture created by technopoly. Second, I explore the rhetoricity of *Technopoly* through an application of the work of Kenneth Burke. This exploration reveals that Postman creates a scene of technopical culture, and the act of loving resistance to respond the dangers posed by technopoly. I end this chapter by offering three implications of this scene-act ratio which is present within *Technopoly*—the continuing need to resist technopoly, the nature of the rhetoric of media ecology, and how that rhetoric is implicated by the reemergence of the problems of determinism.

In Medias Res: Loving Resistance in the Midst Postman's Technopical Culture

Neil Postman titled the final chapter of *Technopoly* (1992) "The Loving Resistance Fighter." Although the loving resistance fighter does not appear until the end of text, loving resistance begins, *in medias res*, in the middle of our current culture of technopoly. Viewing the ending as the middle seems counterintuitive, but one must remember that we find ourselves within thicket of technopoly and its attendant narratives. The loving resistance fighter, in particular, signifies what we can do to respond to the power of technopoly. Earlier in the text,

Postman described technopoly as totalitarian technocracy in which all culture becomes subsumed by technology. Politics, education, religion, etc. fall under the demands of technology. The moral teachings of religion become obsolete, but not illegal, in the technolopical culture. The values inherent in democracy remain of secondary importance to technology. Education becomes nothing more than skills training. In this world, the individual communicative agent finds oneself in the middle of the culture run amok. For this agent, traditional political, educational, and religious thinking have been rendered impotent by techopoly. Politics, religion, and education, once potent forces, are now useless, if you accept technolopical culture. In order to recover those resources, one must think outside of techolopical culture while still remaining in it. Loving resistance cannot simply just reach back and acquire those resources without having an account of technopoly. According to Postman, we need a re-articulation of political, educational, and religious thinking which accounts for, but does not accommodate, technopoly. This demands a rethinking of narratives.

Consequently, Postman does not envision the loving resistance as a set of instructions which one completes step-by-step in order to enact traditional forms of thought to overcome technopoly. On the contrary, the loving resistance fighter constitutes, not a solution, but a "reasonable response" to technopoly (Postman, 1992, p. 182). Instead of a set of instructions, the loving resistance fighter offers a measured and careful response to technopoly. A set of instructions operates as an either/or proposition. You can accept these instructions, or you can ignore them. Accepting the instructions means accepting that the chosen course will lead to a specific and definable end. Disregarding the instructions will lead to ruination, but Postman does not offer an either/or proposition. He explicitly states that loving resistance does not operate as a how-to approach (Postman, 1992, p. 182). The forces of technopoly may be inevitable, but if one

embodies loving resistance, then one possesses the ability to carve out day-to-day practices which can account for, or are inoculated from, technopoly. No one is overthrowing technopoly, but loving resistance offers ground for different modes of interpretation outside of technical thinking.

Recognition of being stuck in the middle of technopoly contrasts with the idea that one must embrace Luddite tendencies and eschew all technology. If we are to understand the loving resistance fighter as a philosophy of communication, then the distinction between resistance and eschewing becomes important. A philosophy of communication provides resources for meaning, and these resources for meaning allow us to engage and interpret the world around us (Arnett & Holba, 2012). Relative pitch becomes a way to think through the philosophy of communication (Arnett & Holba, 2012, p. 225). If one possesses perfect pitch and demands that others have perfect pitch, then the potential to make music becomes limited. On the other hand, with a relative pitch, one has a point of reference and can hear the performance of others and simulate and/or accommodate others. In the same way, a Luddite stance toward the technological landscape cannot accommodate; this position can only destroy. The Luddite only has two options. The Luddite can only destroy the technology, or the Luddite will destroy themselves when they realize that the technological landscape will not acquiesce to destruction. Loving resistance enters technopoly *in medias res* and responds reasonably. Loving resistance must hear the political, religious, and educational thinking standing outside of technopoly and move it to respond to technopoly, instead of using these resources as a cudgel to smash the machine.

To do this, loving resistance must start with a refusal to accept technological development as tantamount to human development, but, at the same time, the loving resistance fighter does not become completely obstinate to technological development. Loving resistance,

by starting in the middle, must walk a fine line between refusal and obstinance. This requires, Postman (1992) writes, "an epistemological and psychic distance from any technology, so that it always appears somewhat strange, never inevitable, never natural" (p. 185). The loving resistance fighter holds that technology can be nefarious. The nefariousness of technology is not user-dependent. Technology can be inherently nefarious, inherently destructive. The loving resistance fighter does not say, "Well, a hammer can be used to smash a window or build a house. It just depends on how you use it." On the contrary, the loving resistance fighter asks, "How does holding the hammer change my orientation toward the world?" In the parlance of media ecology and its thinking about systems (Nystrom, 1973), loving resistance asks, "How did the introduction of the hammer change the system around the hammer after its introduction?" At the same time, the loving resistance fighter admits that technology can be a beneficence. They admit that technology can extend life. The loving resistance fighter does not place all responsibility of technology in the hands of a single individual, and they do not presume that the individual can overcome all the nefariousness of a technology or maximize all of the benefits of technology.

The notion of distance allows one to see the systematic changes wrought by technology. Distance allows for loving resistance by providing space for one to stand away from technology. Over the course of human history, technology intertwined with culture, and because of this, technology "does not invite a close examination of its own consequences" (Postman, 1992, p. xii). By holding technology at a distance, one does not immediately acquiesce to technology's demands. Closeness allows for embracing technology. I also want to emphasize that distance is epistemological and psychic, not physical. An attempt to keep physical distance from technology makes for a fool's errand. Physically distancing oneself from technology could only result in

distancing oneself from all others. We have to live with technology, and we have to live within a technological landscape. Keeping a psychic and epistemological distance requires something different than keeping a physical distance.

An ecological view of media and technology allows one to keep epistemological and psychic distance. The ecological view epistemologically pulls the individual communicative agent out of the environment, and the ecological view does this by rejecting an instrumental view of technology. If we have an ecological understanding of technology, we must break from an instrumental view of technology. An instrumental view looks at technology as a means to an end. The orientation toward a hammer I described previously stands as an example of the instrumental view of technology. Here is another. An instrumental view of a pen contends that the pen is an efficient way to write one's thoughts. An ecological view of a pen contends that a pen, or the technology of writing, allows for an exteriorization of individual thoughts. The ecological view considers the consequences of this exteriorization on the surrounding environment and system. Postman provides yet another illustrative example in describing the ecological consequences of eyeglasses in *Amusing Ourselves to Death*. He writes, "Eyeglasses refuted the belief that anatomy is destiny by putting forward the idea that our bodies as well as our minds are improvable" (Postman, 1985, p. 14). Eyeglasses did not change a mass collection of individuals; eyeglasses changed our fundamental understanding of anatomy. Moreover, the instrumental view reduces the pen or eyeglasses to a simple tool, and the instrumental view over-emphasizes the actions of the individual.

This begs the question: how do we keep technology from a psychic and epistemological distance? How do we keep it at arm's length in order to have an ecological view of technology? If we are so intertwined with technology, how does one distance themselves from technology to

critically examine its consequences at a systematic level? An answer emerges when we acknowledge the rhetoricity of *Technopoly* and the narrative drama therein. Postman's text employs a scene-act ratio which draws the reader's attention to the technological landscape, and I will discuss this ratio in the following section.

Attribution of Motives in *Technopoly*

In order to resist technopoly, one must first recognize they live within its boundaries. Technology's intermingling with culture prevents those living with a culture from seeing the ways in which technology functions ecologically. At best, we understand technology instrumentally. This intermingling of culture and technology limits most critical examination of technology to the instrumental view mentioned previously. Seeing technopoly requires awareness. However, developing an awareness of technopoly remains difficult because we live within it. Technology shapes and patterns so many of our day-to-day activities that we forget its presence. Media ecology recognizes that media (and also technology) function as environments, and media ecology studies media as environments (Postman, 1970; Nystrom, 1973; Lum, 2006; Strate, 2006; Strate, 2017b; Cali, 2017). Studying media as environments is inherently complex, especially when an environment will have multiple media (Lum, 2006, p. 30). If technopoly constitutes, as Postman (1992) suggests, a "totalitarian technocracy" (p. 48), then it is a total and ubiquitous environment. This environment includes endless technologies that we pass through without thinking about them. The technological world appears natural and pre-ordained. Media ecology suggests that we are like fish in water. A fish in water does not recognize that it is in the water, because the water is the natural environment. Technology has become our water. We live within it, but yet we are only partially aware of its influence on our patterns of behavior and action. What we need is the perspective to see technology as an environment.

Gaining the perspective to see technology as an environment requires hard work. A fish out of water immediately recognizes that it is outside of the water, but getting out of the water usually requires the effort of an outside force. Viewing and understanding technology as an environment demands that we view this environment "with our eyes wide open" (Postman, 1992, p. 6). The media ecology tradition suggests that we must remember that technology/media has attendant biases, that each technology/medium has a unique set of biases, and those biases have specific consequences on our perceptive abilities (Lum, 2006, pp. 32-33). For these reasons, we do not easily arrive at the ecological view of media. The loving resistance fighter must be vigilant to attend to these biases, and we cannot be vigilant without effort.

Moreover, a fish out of water finds itself in a painful state as it is deprived of the water it needs to survive, and consequently, pulling ourselves out of the environment requires us to take a risk. In *Technopoly* (1992), Postman acknowledges that technology adds to our conditions of survival because technology "makes life easier, cleaner, and longer" (p. xii). Pulling ourselves out of the technological environment, therefore, runs the risk of exposing ourselves to a harder, dirtier, and shorter life. Technology augments our physiological survival, and humans cannot live without technology (Ihde, 1990, p. 10). Loving resistance asks that we take a risk because we push against sources of our survival. Keeping a bulwark against something that helps us to survive, at the very least, feels counterintuitive.

A fish would not willingly pull itself out of the water, but some fish do risk comfort and ease to ensure survival. A salmon swimming upstream comes to mind. Salmon will swim upstream to the location of their birth in order to reproduce. Swimming upstream means swimming against the current, and so when the salmon swim upstream they must repeatedly leap out of the water to counteract the current that wants to push them downstream. The ecological

view of media, I believe, operates in the same way. The "current" that is technology pushes us in one direction, and in order for us to move in a different direction, we must leap out of the current. Even though we are only out of the water for a brief moment, if we leap out enough times, we can get to where we are going. Those moments when we leap out give us a different perspective, but there is one key difference between our swimming upstream and the salmon swimming upstream: salmon do this naturally in order to reproduce and survive. We humans must be *motivated* to do it; humans need narrative grounding to do what might seem unnatural and counterintuitive

Because gaining the ecological view of technology requires hard work, risk, and pushes against our instincts, we must be motivated to take the ecological view. We must be motivated to embrace loving resistance. The loving resistance fighter becomes an appropriate response once Postman positions the idea of the loving resistance fighter against the backdrop of technopoly. In this sense, *Technopoly* motivates us to act in the form of loving resistance as a response to the dangers inherent in technopoly. *Technopoly* motivates us to take the ecological view by explicating the technological world as a dramatic landscape within which we find ourselves. *Technopoly* motivates us to embody loving resistance by utilizing the rhetorical force of drama. *Technopoly* develops what Kenneth Burke (1945) called a scene-act ratio in which technopoly (a totalitarian technocracy) functions as a scene and loving resistance functions as an act.

Drama and Motivation

Kenneth Burke offers a way to understand human motivation through the analysis of drama. Burke's written corpus defies systematic classification into any one field or subject (Hyman, 1947/1955). However, those working within the field of communication claim that his perspective constitutes a rhetorical view (Foss, Foss, & Trapp, 1992). In *Grammar of Motives*

(1945/1962), Burke begins with the following question; "What is involved, when we say what people are doing and why are they doing it?" (p. xvii). For Burke, lurking behind articulated thought stands motivation. Grammar structures spoken, written, and symbolic expressions, and by examining the grammar of these expressions, a critic can uncover the motivations behind those expressions. Burke contends that we can understand the structure of motivations through dramatic analysis. The grammar of motivation is the grammar of drama. Within drama, one will find an act (the thing that was done), the scene (where the act took place), the agent (the person performing the act), the agency (how the act was performed), and purpose (why the act took place) (Burke, 1945/1962, p. xvii). The act, scene, agent, agency, and purpose organize into what Burke (1945/1962) called the pentad (p. xvii). The pentad offers an opening for understanding human motivation and, in turn, human action.

Although identifying the elements of the pentad is important, a critical analysis of a text requires one to examine how the elements of the pentad operate in relation to one another. Burke calls these ratios. Burke utilizes the term ratio because a ratio refers to the proportion of one element to another. In addition, a ratio can illustrate whether one item can contain another item. By uncovering the ratio(s) within a text, the critic can discover motivation. Burke (1945/1962) called ratios "principles of determination" (p. 15). Ratios become powerful heuristic devices that reveal qualities of a text which might pass by the reader on the first encounter with a text. In this sense, ratios become revelatory. Ratios allow the text to become known to the critic. They offer an opening into how the text operates, and by understanding how the text operates, we discover how the text motivates the audience to act, and we can better understand the narratives within the text.

Burke (1945/1962) identified ten ratios based on the five elements of the pentad ("scene-act, scene-agent, scene-agency, scene-purpose, act-purpose, act-agent, act-agency, agent-purpose, agent-agency, and agency-purpose") (p. 15). Each ratio carries with it a distinct and unique type of motivation. For example, Burke (1945/1962) writes, "From the motivational point of view, there is implicit in the quality of a scene the quality of the action that is to take place within it" (p. 6-7). The nature of the scene establishes the nature of the act. The critic discovers motivation in the consistency of the act in relation to the scene. Burke frames this ratio (and the scene-agent ratio) as the "Container and Thing Contained" (1945/1962, p. 3). In this ratio, Burke (1945/1962) writes, "It is the principle of drama that the nature of acts and agents should be consistent with the nature of the scene" (p. 3). As an example, Burke refers to a scene in *Hamlet* in which the cliff side landscape opens the possibility for the action of suicide. The dreadful landscape invites the dreadful act. In the scene-act ratio, the *environment* explains behavior and action. The landscape frames and explains action. As I will further demonstrate, Neil Postman employs this ratio throughout *Technopoly*.

Scene-Act Ratio

The scene-act ratio imbibes *Technopoly* (1992), and understanding this ratio helps to pinpoint the narrative grounding for the loving resistance fighter. This project seeks to recover the work of Neil Postman—who tends to favor the spirit and ethos of modernity (Strate, 1994)—by articulating the loving resistance fighter as a philosophy of communication that provides meaning and understanding to our current technological landscape. At first glance, because Postman indicates loving resistance as something individuals can do regardless of cultural shifts, the loving resistance fighter would seem to emphasize individualism and the individual communicative agent. A cursory reading of loving resistance would suggest that Postman

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employs an agent-act ratio (in Burkean terms). However, claiming that Postman utilizes the agent-act ignores that fact the loving resistance fighter finds himself or herself *in medias res* of the technological landscape—i.e. technopoly.

Establishing Neil Postman's loving resistance fighter as a philosophy of communication demands examination of the grammatical underpinnings of his ideas, as a philosophy. It requires analysis of the drama. As I claim, Neil Postman's media ecology, particularly in *Technopoly*, forwards a scene-act ratio. Burke (1945/1962) argues that philosophies that emphasize scene utilize the grammar of "*materialism*" (p. 128, emphasis in original). Materialism presumes that motion and (to a lesser extent) action are explainable in terms of the body or the whole. The philosophical perspectives of Thomas Hobbes and Charles Darwin originate with the ideas of materialism and scene. The Hobbesian notion of a war of all against all provides the scenic foundation for action. For Hobbes, we must submit to the sovereign and/or the rule of law because of the natural conditions of the scene. Scenic foundations imbibe the act of submitting the will to the sovereign. The sovereign, as an agent, must protect his or her subject because of the scenic conditions of the war of all against all. In writing about Darwin's evolutionary biology, Burke (1945/1962) writes, "Because of its affinities with scene, Darwin can use it to explain cases where changing conditions can be correlated with changes in organic structure" (p. 158). The scenic foundations of natural selection and survival postulate that agent changes to adapt meet the conditions of the scene.

The purpose of this project is not to establish Neil Postman's media ecology and *Techopoly* as a philosophy of communication grounded in materialism. Instead, this project seeks to move Postman's loving resistance fighter into the philosophy of communication tempered by the postmodern condition. Because loving resistance appears in the midst of the technolopical

landscape, we cannot say that Postman begins with the communicative agent. He does not offer the idealism of Kant and over-emphasize the communicative agent and individualism. Because Postman establishes the loving resistance fighter in the middle of technopoly, we can say that he turns away from the excesses of modernity. The act of loving resistance does not arise from the strength of the individual with a Nietzschean will to power over cultural circumstances; instead, it arises from the cultural conditions of technopoly. Despite his affinity for modernity, Postman does not demand the centrality of the communicative agent. He recognizes the power of narratives to guide action.

Technopoly's Culture as a Scene

Scholars within the tradition of media ecology frequently associate culture and technology. Walter Ong (1982/2002) identified oral and literate cultures. Marshall McLuhan (1962) identified the Tribal Age, Literate Age, Print Age, and Electronic Age, each marked by the invention of technologies. Lewis Mumford (1934) identified the Eotechnic, Paleotechnic, and Neotechnic periods with each period, again, marked by technological inventions or changes in the ways in which humans applied and used power. For each scholar, the technological developments of a given age occasioned the social and psychic world. For example, McLuhan argued that culture shifted from an ear-dominant culture to a visually dominant culture. The shift from the Tribal (ear) to the Literate Age (eye) occurred through the development of the phonetic alphabet, and this movement had a concomitant shift in our sensory perception. Neil Postman's *Technopoly* forwards the same type of emphasis. He encourages readers to think through issues of culture by looking at the relationship between technology and culture.

As I described in Chapter 1 of this project, Postman articulated three technology-culture relationships in *Technopoly*—tool-using cultures, technocracies, and technopolies. First, recall

that in tool-using cultures, technology functions either in a purely instrumental or symbolic manner. In a tool-using culture, technology can remain subordinate to religion. In a tool-using culture, a given technology could improve the efficiency of some action, but the idea of efficiency as a good did not supplant the goods inherent to religious order. In fourth century Athens, the polis organized the life world, but technology still remained subordinate. The ideal of self-mastery within that polis did not require efficient means, and Plato and Aristotle found the pursuit of efficiency and production to be quite base (Postman, 1992, p. 25). In a tool-using culture, such as Medieval Europe, religious views order the world. Postman (1992) writes, "In any case, theological assumptions served as a controlling ideology, and whatever tools were invented had, ultimately, to fit within that ideology" (p. 26). Again, technology remains subordinate to theological or, in the case of Athens, political thinking.

Second, recall that in a technocracy the tools and technological thinking begin attacking the old traditions. Technology begins to infiltrate the thought world and what societies protect and promote. Prior to the development of technocracies, institutions felt that technology could improve the conditions of life, and, therefore, these societies did not view technological pursuits as base and antithetical to a religious way of life. In a technocracy, on the other hand, improvements wrought by technology started to move into the realm of deity (Postman, 1992, p. 38). Put simply, a non-secular worldview faced competition from technology, and, in a technocracy, technology started to win. In technocracies, theological and political thinking recognize the threat posed by technology. Technological thinking, marked by efficiency recognizes that religious and political order remains antagonistic to the technological order. Therefore, technologies "bid to *become* the culture. As a consequence, tradition, social mores, myth, politics, ritual, and religion have to fight for their lives" (Postman, 1992, p. 28, emphasis

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in original). As an example, Postman offers the work of Copernicus, Kepler, and Galileo and their challenge to the geocentric universe. Religious orders promoted and protected the geocentric (Earth-centered) universe. With the invention of the telescope, Galileo successfully challenged and disrupted the religious order. Technology could not provide insights into the nature of the world in ways that held much greater purchase than the religious order. Postman (1992) contends, "Theology, once the Queen of the Sciences, was now reduced to the status of Court Jester" (p. 34). In a technocracy, technology challenges and tradition resists: remember, the Roman Catholic Church forced Galileo into house arrest; tradition "won." The relationship between technology and religion produces friction, but religion and tradition has a chance and can win.

Third, recall that a technopoly constitutes a "totalitarian technocracy" (Postman, 1992, p. 48). Technology no longer sits below religious, political, and traditional order, as in a tool-using culture. Technology no longer sits beside religious, political, and traditional order. In a totalitarian technocracy, religious, political, and traditional order sit below technology and technological thinking. In a technopoly, technology subsumes all of these orders. This condition resulted from technology's ability to improve the length, health, and convenience of life. At the same time, technological thinking and the application of reason diminished the efficacy of tradition (Postman, 1992, p. 55). In our current historical moment, Postman argues that one makes a mistake by saying that we have a political culture, a religious culture, and a technological culture. Postman made it clear that political and religious culture sit within technological culture.

Postman's view (as well as the view McLuhan, Mumford, and Ong) of the relationship between technology and culture stands as an ecological view of media and technology. Media

ecology posits the study of media as environments. We should note the connection between environment and culture. Media ecology (and media ecologists) presume that "cultures are produced by or emerge out of media environments" (Strate, 2017b, p. 26). Consequently, if the current historical moment stands as a technopoly, then the historical moment of technopoly formed from the media environment. The environment formed from the constellation of technologies. Those working within media ecology view the media environment as "primary" (Strate, 2017b, p. 26). While media ecology maintains an interest in culture, culture stands as a secondary concern to the media environment. Media comes first. This stance differs from other traditions which examine the nexus of communication, media, and culture. For example, diffusion theory categorizes culture based upon the willingness to adopt certain media or technology. The cultural studies of Stuart Hall (1986) asks how media, which are largely dominated by economic forces, manufacture consent within a given culture. In contradistinction from these perspectives, media ecology asks how cultures grow out of the media environment.

To clarify this, later in his career, Postman (2006) utilized a petri dish metaphor to think through the relationship between media environment and culture. A petri dish is a glass or plastics-based cylinder. A substance called agar coats the bottom of the cylinder. A scientist, such as a microbiologist, spreads a living sample of microbes onto the agar. Under controlled conditions, the living sample continues to grow within the petri dish. For Postman, a medium represents the petri dish, and a culture, such as technopoly, represents the living sample of microbes. The medium allows the culture to grow.

As stated in Chapter 1, Postman acknowledges the difference between medium and technology. He reduces a technology to an "apparatus" (Postman, 1985, p. 84). A book, a television, a computer, and a cell phone are technologies. Postman identifies these as

technologies because they are physical entities which we can hold, touch, and use toward specific ends, but each technology produces a "social and intellectual environment" (Postman, 1985, p. 84). Essentially, a television exists as both a technology and a medium. The technological television consists of the screen, plastic, and circuitry. The medium of television consists of the social and intellectual world which forms around it. In *Amusing Ourselves to Death*, Postman (1985) argues that the television (as a technology) forms an environment of entertainment. Television is a technology uniquely suited to create an environment of entertainment. If we extend the petri dish metaphor, television constitutes a technology and a medium. That particular medium creates an environment of entertainment, of show business. In that environment, a culture of nonsense, aliteracy, and irrationality grows.

Technopoly forwards a vision in which technology, the collection of apparati, forms a medium, and that medium produces the culture of technopoly. Going back to the petri dish metaphor, Postman articulated the essence of media ecology. He writes, "A medium is a technology within which a culture grows; that is to say, it gives form to a culture's politics, social organization, and habitual ways of thinking" (Postman, 1992, p. 62). Putting all of this together, a reader of *Technopoly* would necessarily conclude the following. Technology is a medium unto itself. Technology gives form to American politics, social organization, and habitual ways of thinking. Postman uses the word *technopoly* to refer to the specific culture that grew out of the collection of technologies. Technopoly usurped all other ways of thinking and acting.

Here, we can see the scenic stress of Neil Postman's media ecology. His petri dish metaphor illustrates the idea of the container and the thing contained. Technology forms a medium and culture (the container). Within that culture we have the thing contained (ways of

thinking and acting in a techopoly). In Chapter 1, I referred to the "Improbable World," "Broken Defenses," "Ideology of Machines," "Invisible Technologies," "Scientism," and "The Great Symbol Drain" which Postman outlined in *Technopoly*. These labels only make sense once Postman established the scenic qualities of the larger environment. From an ecology standpoint, actions or, if you prefer the Burkean terms, motions make sense through the context of scene. For example, technology allows for the reproduction of images (scene). The reproduction of images allows for sacred symbols to lose their meaning. This Great Symbol Drain becomes a tenable phenomenon, only when Postman outlines the scenic qualities. Technology, as a medium, constructs the scene for The Great Symbol Drain. Extending the work of Daniel Boorstin's *The Image* (1962), Neil Postman argues, "Through prints, lithographs, photographs, and, later, movies and television, religious and national symbols became commonplaces, breeding indifference if not necessarily contempt" (1992, p. 166). The technological landscape, which allows for mass reproduction of images, transforms the nature of symbols. The flag, the cross, and, as I mentioned in Chapter 1, the Great Emancipator lose value and meaning. In the medium of technology, meaningful symbols become meaningless.

Within *Technopoly*, a critical reader observes how a technopoly grants permissibility to certain acts. In this sense, *Technopoly*, as a text, centers itself on the scene-act ratio. In this instance, we see the scene-act ratio played out as technopoly—The Great Symbol Drain. Technopoly constitutes the scene and the The Great Symbol Drain constitutes the act. The following passage illustrates the manifestation of the scene-act ratio; "In Technopoly, the trivialization of significant cultural symbols is largely conducted by commercial enterprise. This occurs not because corporate America is greedy but because the adoration of technology pre-empts the adoration of anything else" (Postman, 1992, p. 165). Postman draws the reader's

attention to the act instead of the agent. Corporate America form agents because this bloc of people engage in the performance, but the act supersedes agency. Certainly, Postman claims that greed motivates corporate America; however, this motivation remains secondary to the acts sanctioned by technopoly. Technopoly demands that its citizens must only view technology as divine and sacred (Postman, 1992, p. 166). Therefore, religious and national symbols should "be made impotent as quickly as possible" (Postman, 1992, p. 166). Given the scene of the technological landscape which permits reproduction of images, The Great Symbol Drain becomes a necessary and compulsory act.

Technopoly, as a whole text, establishes itself on the scene-act ratio. The first three chapters ("The Judgment of Thamus," "From Tools to Technocracy," and "From Technocracy to Technopoly") outline the scene. "The Judgment of Thamus" describes the nature of Neil Postman's media ecology. Postman articulates how technology, as a medium, structures the environment and the culture. He writes, "New technologies alter the structure of our interests: the things we think *about*. They alter the character of our symbols: the things we think *with*. And they alter the nature of the community: the arena in which thoughts develop" (Postman, 1992, p, 20, emphasis in original). In "From Tools to Technocracy" and "From Technocracy to Technopoly," develops the scene structured by technology. Technology structures and culture responds in particular ways, or at the very least, they respond to one another in mutually interactive ways. Technology will remain subordinate when kept at a distance, but technology surpasses other cultural foundations when we pull it close. The relationship between technology and tradition becomes a way to classify cultures. This is pure scene. In a dramatic work, a scene on a cliff validates certain acts. A scene in a prison authorizes other acts. In *Technopoly*, a tool-

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using culture approves of acts that are different than the acts approved by a technocracy, and a technocracy approbates acts that a technopoly would not allow.

By establishing the technopoly as scene, the following acts make sense. In a technopoly, any claim becomes possible or realistic (Chapter 4, "The Improbable World"). In a technopoly, the institutions which control the glut and meaning of information falter (Chapter 5, "Broken Defenses"). In a technopoly, we submit, not to the ideas of humans and humanity, but to the ideas of technology (Chapter 6, "The Ideology of Machines: Medical Technology" and Chapter 7, "The Ideology of Machines: Computer Technology"). In a technopoly, technology, which is not human, corrupts our inherently human language in ways that undermine our capacity to reason (Chapter 8, "Invisible Technologies"). In a technopoly, we can apply the scientific method to human behavior, and this scientific method, somehow, constitutes a coherent system of beliefs (Chapter 9, "Scientism"). In a technopoly, technology reproduces images to such an extent that images become meaningless (Chapter 10, "The Great Symbol Drain"). Finally, in a technopoly, if you want to protect yourself from the nefarious consequences of technopoly, Postman (1992), in Chapter 11, implores, "You must try to be a loving resistance fighter" (p. 183). These acts gain coherence through the scene of technopoly. If we are convinced that technology structures actions and thought, then it makes sense that most actions will propagate technology, not religion or national identity. The technological landscape becomes the origin point for action, not the individual agent.

Loving Resistance Fighter as an Act.

A Grammar of Motives (1945/1962), as a whole, seeks to uncover the basis for acts and action (p. 227). Burke positions act and action as synonymous with doing and "what was done" (1945/1962, p. xvii). Doing centers itself on performance. The locus of an act rests on

discharging, execution, and/or implementation. When Postman states that one must work to live as a loving resistance fighter, he calls for action. In his prelude to introducing the loving resistance fighter, Postman states that loving resistance functions as "what the individual can do irrespective of what the culture is doing" (1992, p. 182). A cursory glance at this statement might lead one to believe that Postman ignores the notion of scene. However, this conclusion is erroneous. Resistance becomes necessary only when the scene demands it. The nature of culture, or to put it in terms of this project, the nature of the scene makes resistance possible. A prison scene facilitates the possibility of resignation to prison authority, or a prison scene can facilitate obstinance to that authority. In the same way, as a scene, technopoly, despite being totalitarian, permits a range of responses. One response could be a total submission to the nature of technology, hoping for humanity's complete and total integration into a technological world (see Bostrom, 2009, Kurzweil, 1999; 2005). Another response—another act—forged by the scene, manifests as resistance. I do not intend to suggest that acquiescence and loving resistance constitute the only responses to technopoly. Instead, I wish to emphasize that specific scenes offer specific responses. We can explain the motivation behind certain responses based upon the conditions of the scene. *Technopoly* paints a dark portrait of our technological culture. This dark portrait requires resistance. The scene of technopoly calls for the response of loving resistance. This explains why, despite all of the advantages offered by technology, one should resist the forces of a thought world dominated by technology. The scene of technopoly calls for an act of resistance. This is *Technopoly's* rhetorical turn moving us to act. The text moves us to respond to the historical moment in which we find ourselves.

Again, a cursory look at the term loving resistance fighter might lead one to believe that Postman emphasizes the agent. Referring to the agent in the pentad, Burke (1945/1962) claims

that "you must indicate what person or kind of person (agent) performed the act" (p. xvii). If one

imagines the loving resistance fighter akin to the members of the French Resistance, then the

agent might move into the foreground. The audience imagines an agent acting covertly to

undermine the occupying force. However, thinking of the loving resistance fighter as one person

or a kind of person presumes that an individual possesses innate qualities. In the introduction of

A Grammar of Motives, Burke describes a prisoner as an example of an agent. The scenic

qualities of a prison makes the qualities of a prisoner natural. As an agent, a prisoner will

naturally seek freedom and act to break out—or maintain good behavior—to ensure an early

release from prison. Given the scene of technopoly, most individuals become naturally

accustomed to the demands of technopoly and acquiesce to it explicitly or implicitly. The

naturalness of acquiesce to technopoly runs through us because, as Postman notes, of our long

and close relationship with technology.

A textured reading of the loving resistance fighter reveals something different than this

cursory examination, however. The loving resistance fighter forms an *act* within the scene of

technopoly. The loving resistance fighter becomes an act because the term, loving resistance

fighter, names what takes place. In the pentad, the act "names what took place, in thought or

deed" (Burke, 1945/1962, p. xvii). Here, I offer a brief explanation on how Neil Postman names

the loving resistance fighter.

When Postman authored *Technopoly* (1992), he made it clear that only America's

relationship with technology constituted a technopoly. Since the time of its publication, scholars

contend that technopolies have emerged where western technologies, in particular media,

preceded (see Rose 2017), but one should remember that Postman's technopoly refers to a

specifically American phenomenon. Technopoly emerged in the United States because of four

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factors: the nature of the American ethos (described by Alexis de Tocqueville), the success of American capitalism, the nature of American technology in providing a more hygenic world, and, finally, the decline of non-technological traditions (Postman, 1992, pp. 52-54). If technopoly forms a scene in Postman's writing, then it is an American scene.

Consequently, the response to technopoly, in the form of the loving resistance fighter, becomes a response informed by America. Although a loving resistance fighter laments America's formation as a technopoly, the loving resistance fighter does not lament the best qualities of the American project. Put another way, the loving resistance fighter finds resources within the American project and *narrative*. Even though American technopoly can prove to be monstrous and nonsensical, "you must always keep close to your heart the narratives and symbols that once made the United States the hope of the world and that may yet have enough vitality to do so again" (Postman, 1992, p. 182). Keeping the narratives and symbols of the American project close to the heart does not mean that one engages in performative patriotism or submission to a militaristic view of America. The narratives a loving resistance fighter holds dear may include narratives pertaining to forging a country without restraining political and religious beliefs, narratives centered on forging a country through immigration, and narratives which promote access to education and literacy (Postman, 1992, p. 183).

All of the narratives Postman lauds center themselves on a rational and humane view of the world. When one takes into account Postman's larger corpus, the deliberate nature of this choice becomes clear. As stated previous, Postman stood as a champion for the modern in postmodern times (Strate, 1994). American narratives play a central role in modernity. Although America's founding documents (Declaration of Independence and The Constitution of the United States) functioned primarily as a recrimination of corruption within the British government, these

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documents contained the ideals of the Enlightenment (Dolbeare, 1998, p. 9). While Postman (1988a, 1992) does not defend an America corrupted by television media and technology (the American technopoly), he does defend America as an articulation of the ideals of Enlightenment. The loving resistance fighter must love these ideals and should separate them from the corrupting force of technology and technopoly.

When Postman writes about the loving resistance fighter, he writes about the notion of love. While Postman does not take the time to explicitly define love in *Technopoly*, as stated previously, to love the American project means that one should keep the American project close to the heart, not at a distance. American techopoly promotes "cynicism and malaise" (Postman, 1992, p. 182). Certainly, given the history of colonization, racism, sexism, and heteronormativity prevalent within the American narrative, cynicism and malaise can seem like appropriate responses to the American project. The American narrative intertwines with systems of domination. Moreover, since The Constitution of the United States sanctioned the practice of slavery and did not offer the franchise to women or persons without property, one could argue that the framers of the Constitution built systems of domination into the legal framework of the United States. However, the act of loving resistance begins with the act of love. Communication literature points to several types of love (Wood, 2007), but for the purposes of chapter and project, I reach my understanding of love through an understanding of a contrast. Love, which Postman sets apart from cynicism and malaise, points to affection as opposed to discomfort (malaise). Love involves trust, as opposed to distrust and mistrust (cynicism). To love the American project means that one should find something redeemable within it. If you cannot love the American project, there remains no point in rescuing it from technopoly. Loving the American project requires loving the narratives guiding it.

Beyond the act of love, Postman frames the loving resistance fighter not as an agent but through specific act. In this description, Postman becomes more explicit than in his description of love. In *Technopoly* (1992), Postman lists ten acts of the loving resistance fighter. Individuals resisting the American technopoly are those:

who pay no attention to a poll unless they know what questions were asked and why;

who refuse to accept efficiency as the pre-eminent goal of human relations;

who have freed themselves from the belief in the magical powers of numbers, do not regard calculation as an adequate substitute for judgment, or precision as a synonym for truth;

who refuse to allow psychology or any "social science" to pre-empt the language and thought of common sense;

who are, at least, suspicious of the idea of progress, and who do not confuse information with understanding;

who do not regard the aged as irrelevant;

who take seriously the meaning of family loyalty and honor, and who, when they "reach out and touch someone," expect that person to be in the same room;

who take the great narratives of religion seriously and who do not believe that science is the only system of thought capable of producing truth;

who know the difference between the sacred and the profane, and who do not wink at tradition for modernity's sake;

who admire technological ingenuity but do not think it represents the highest form of human achievement. (Postman, 1992, p. 183-184).

When one takes into account Postman's broader corpus, his decision to include this list of acts is deliberate and purposeful. Elsewhere, Postman (1985, 1988a, 2006) pointed to his childhood fascination with the Decalogue (The Ten Commandments). Identifying ten acts of loving resistance remains in keeping with Postman's orientation toward action. By listing ten acts, he offers the reader to keep these actions in mind when one encounters a poll, a calculation, an aged person, and so on. Like the Decalogue, the reader, *any reader*, can memorize them and deploy them in day to day actions. Just as anyone can obey the commandments of God, anyone can act as a loving resistance fighter. It does not require some special ability or characteristic. Obeying God and loving resistance becomes acts that anyone can perform. As such, the loving resistance fighter becomes an act instead of an agent, and *Technopoly* provides the narrative ground for acting with loving resistance. Postman does not point to a specific person. Instead, he identifies the actions of the person resisting technopoly. This person can be anyone, or, more specifically, when considering the rhetorical turn of the text, this person (the loving resistance fighter) can be the person reading *Technopoly*.

I believe it important to note the significance of the Ten Commandments to Burke's corpus. Specifically, the Ten Commandments function as calls for moral action (Burke, 1966; 1961). Again, if the Ten Commandments work as a form of moral action, then moral action dislodges itself from agency. It requires no special characteristics to act in accordance with the Ten Commandments. Unlike the capacity to reason, which inherently belongs to the individual. Moral behavior does not depend on the innate qualities or the reasoning ability of a given individual. Any individual can engage in moral behavior. Perhaps the only common characteristic individuals might share would be the concept of original sin.

Consequently, like a follower of the Ten Commandments, the loving resistance fighter need not be an inherently "good" person. You can become a loving resistance fighter through your actions. While one takes on the actions at the individual level, this does not submit itself to the notion of individualism run amok. The Ten Commandments belong to the community of God. They belong to everyone, not a single individual. In the same way, the ten actions of a loving resistance fighter do not belong to a single individual. They belong to us all. Note, the actions do not require money or resources. They operate as actions of the mind and language. Moreover, the act of resistance remains different from an act of domination. Individualism functions as a misstep when one mistakenly believes that he or she can will the world into different conditions (Arnett & Holba, 2012). The ten actions of the loving resistance fighter do not attempt to make the world into something that it is not. These actions promote skepticism and respect. An individual can be skeptical and respectful, but Postman does not demand that the world become skeptical and respectful. This distinction keeps the loving resistance fighter from slipping into the individualism that made modernity the system of domination that Taylor (1989) identified. Loving resistance becomes an act anyone can employ within the landscape of techopoly, and this narrative grounding for loving resistances provides the why. We resist technopoly because technopoly corrupts our traditions. Our traditions are worthwhile, and we must embrace them to have any hope of countering technopoly.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I argue that the scene-act ratio operates within Neil Postman's *Technopoly*. In this ratio, technolopical culture forms the scene, and loving resistance becomes an act to push against the totalitarian culture. By articulating this ratio, we identify the motivation for the act of loving resistance, and the articulation of this ratio allows us to

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understand how we can engage in loving resistance and foster its development. Postman provides the narrative ground for the act of resistance to technopoly. He challenges the unreflective narratives of technopoly which reposition the strength of technical thinking. Moreover, from this analysis, I posit three implications that I outline below.

First, we still need loving resistance, and, therefore, we still need the narratives that ground loving resistance. The purpose of this chapter was to establish why loving resistance is needed in this historical moment and contemporary period. Although Postman wrote *Technopoly* at the end of the twentieth century, the need for loving resistance remains. Postman did not live long enough to witness the rise of digital technologies that have become a ubiquitous component of daily life in western and developed countries. The economy surrounding those digital technologies has formed into a type of "digital industrialism" in which organizations actively attempt to remove humans from contributing to organizational goals (Rushkoff, 2016, p. 13). Human labor costs money, and because technology can perform the actions of a humans, human labor becomes nothing more than overhead. As an example of this development, global consulting firms, such as McKinsey & Company, devote themselves to creating technological and data-based solutions to governments and corporations, so that they become more and more efficient and less and less dependent on human resources (Roth, 2019; Anonymous, 2019). Digital technology and the digital economy has placed us into a state when our only choice becomes adapt or perish (Rushkoff, 2016, p. 23). Totalitarian technocracy still reigns supreme. We either submit to technopoly's demands, or we run the risk of losing out on technopoly's benefits. On the other hand, loving resistance suggests that we can respond differently to the technological landscape. We just have to see technopoly's trap.

The Luddites began smashing factory equipment because they felt the real consequences of the mechanization of labor and the infiltration of technology on their well-being, but in our contemporary period, we might not feel the same pinch of technology that the Luddites experienced. Again, because of our close relationship with technology, we fail to recognize the consequences of the technology on our daily interactions. Technology, as a medium, has dulled our sensory perceptions, and we remain like fish swimming with the current, unaware that we are in the water. We have become too close to technology to see it for what it is. We have to pull ourselves out, and to get us out, to motivate us to act, Postman avails himself in *Technopoly* to the most powerful tool he has available, rhetoric.

This brings us to the second implication of my analysis. Although we primarily think of Neil Postman as a media ecologist, rhetorical performances occur in the background of Postman's media ecology, and we can begin to see Postman as both a rhetorician and rhetor. Given his affinity for general semantics and general semantics' aversion to Aristotilean systems, one might imagine that Neil Postman might be disinclined to view rhetoric in a positive light. After all, the entire canon of western rhetoric functions as a response to Aristotle's system of classification of rhetoric (Bizzell & Herzberg, 2001). Aristotle's articulation of rhetoric constituted a "scientific approach" (Golden, Berquist, & Coleman, 2000, p. 29). Aristotle sought to distinguish types of rhetorical situations and appeals from one another much in the same way that he classified animal species. General semantics fundamentally problematizes Aristotelian systems of classification (Korzybski, 1948). In an Aristotelian system, words and things operate as binaries. A word or a thing is either "A or not-A" (Postman, 1988a, p. 143). However, despite the antipathy between Aristotle and General Semantics, Postman does hold rhetoric in high

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regard. Even though he does not devote much specific attention to the term rhetoric in his written corpus, he argued for rhetoric's inclusion in contemporary curriculum (Postman, 1999, p. 163)

Importantly, Postman's affinity for rhetoric becomes apparent when one considers his approach to scholarship and, in turn, writing. Research, especially research conducted within the tradition of media ecology, legitimates itself by "embracing the role of creators and narrators of social myth" (Postman, 1988a, p. 17). The teleology of scholarship should be to discover/rediscover truth, and scholarship fulfills this function when we "put forward metaphors, images, and ideas that can help people live with some measure of understanding and dignity" (Postman, 1988a, p. 18). Research and writing should help audiences, and because research and writing should help audiences, we should construct arguments and ideas using the narratives and metaphors which reveal the truth. Rhetoric rests at the heart of this type of research. Strate's (2017a) commentary on Postman's approach to scholarship supports this idea. Postman did not construct a philosophy or engage in theory-building; instead, "each book was meant to stand alone as a self-contained argument about our current state of affairs, about how we are doing and where we are going" (Strate, 2017a, p. 13). From a rhetorical perspective, the exigency of the moment required *Technopoly*, so, naturally, we will find rhetorical forms, such as the scene-act ratio, within it. Postman's work was not intrinsic to a scholarly conversation or theory-building; therefore, the rhetorical turn found within *Technopoly* might have been premeditated—an attempt to influence audiences.

Consequently, we can begin to parse out the motivations behind Postman's *Technopoly*. This text stood as his coda on media and technology. Although he would continue to write from the perspective of media ecology, at the time he wrote it, *Technopoly* was the omega—the ending, the last letter on technology. He admitted as much to his students (Strate, 2017a, p. 14).

Therefore, *Technopoly* contains an urgency to it. If the technological environment remains so dangerous, then we must become witnesses to technopoly's influence on our daily life, and when we become aware, we can take action. We can resist. *Technopoly* seeks to pull us out of this stupor; it pulls us out of the technolopical culture by drawing our attention to the scene of technology.

Hence, because of the rhetorical underpinnings of Postman's media ecology, we can see how media ecology becomes conflated with technological determinism. This is the third implication of my analysis. Media ecology has long had to contend with accusations of technological determinism because the tradition of media ecology has intersected with technology studies (Strate, 2006) and technological determinism (Strate, 2017b, p. 34). Lance Strate offers a compelling rebuttal to these accusations (2017b, p. 154). Those that contend that media ecology operates as a naive form of technological determinism, according to Strate, have a fundamental misunderstanding of the nature of cause. Technological determinism rests on the notion of linear cause, but media ecology rests on the notion of environmental conditions (Strate, 2017b, p. 154) and systems thinking (Nystrom, 1973). An environment or system does not produce specific effects. An environment or system does not *produce* or *cause* a tree. A tree stands as part of an environment. Postman claims that if you introduce a new type tree or take away all of the current trees the environment or system will necessarily change.

The beliefs undergirding technological determinism operates differently than the environmental and systems thinking that undergird media ecology. Environmental and systems thinking suggest interdependence, and determinism, on the other hand, implies independence and autonomy. Philosopher of technology, Andrew Feenberg (2009), writes, "*Determinism* rests on the assumption that technologies have an autonomous functional logic that can be explained

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without reference to society" (p. 141, emphasis in original). Postman, however, makes no such assumption. Postman claims that societies have a longstanding relationship with technology (1992, p. xii). Postman claims that society and technology interconnect, but we cannot see the interconnection between the two because of the intimate relationship between culture and technology. Moreover, Postman claims we once had tool-using cultures that kept technology at a distance. Because cultures did keep technologies at a distance, Postman does not mean his readers to believe that technology will *always* nettle the affairs of social institutions like politics, education, and religion. However, currently, we find ourselves in a situation in which technology does agitate and influence thinking that occurs in these social institutions.

Despite media ecology's disavowing technological determinism and its intellectual distinction from technological determinism, the scene-act ratio utilized within *Technopoly* invites the belief that media ecology constitutes a form of technological determinism. Burke's conception of scene suggests that rhetorical artifacts grounded in scene ratios (scene-act, scene-agent, scene-agency, scene-purpose) can limit our understanding of the corresponding act, agent, agency, or purpose. Burke (1945/1962) claims that a restricted articulation of scene creates a restriction upon what occurs within the scene (p. 9). Postman (2006) claimed that his media ecology has a moral telos; he felt his media ecology could improve the human condition by pointing out how technology undermines our humanity and social institution, but by employing rhetoric to achieve this end and turning his focus on the scene of technology, he invites the critique of technological determinism. This serves a reminder to those of us that embrace the intellectual tradition of media ecology that as we build our intellectual tradition we cannot escape the rhetorical turn of our work. When we make that rhetorical turn, we run the risk of embracing a monologue which rails, possibly with anger, against technology. If we do this, we

unfortunately give technology its own logic and become associated with technological determinism.

Within the tradition of philosophy of communication, the rhetorical turn might become inevitable, but the philosophy of communication does not premeditate the rhetorical turn. In the next chapter, I will continue my articulation of loving resistance as a philosophy of communication through an exegesis Neil Postman's loving resistance fighter. This exegesis moves Postman's work away from social and cultural criticism and turns it toward a philosophy of communication.

The loving resistance fighter requires distance from technology and technological thinking. Keeping distance from technology and the dangers of technopoly proves difficult given the long and intimate relation with technology; often, we do not recognize the influence of technology on a day-to-day basis, because our relationship with technology became immensely enmeshed. Consequently, in order to motivate one to become a loving resistance fighter, to reject the influence of technopoly, Postman constructs a scene-act ratio within *Technopoly.* In this ratio, culture, as influenced by technology, functions as the scene. Each culture Postman identified (tool-using, technocracy, and techopoly), operates as a unique scene. Because technopoly undermines traditions and humanistic impulses, we must act to resist it. The loving resistance fighter, which is not a specific agent, is an act appropriate to the conditions of the scene of technopoly. By embracing love of the American project rather than cynicism and malaise, a person becomes able to pull oneself away from technopoly. Moreover, one resists technopoly by rejecting the precepts of technopoly—its love of progress, efficiency, and individual autonomy—and embraces traditions which exist outside of or pre-dated our current

technopoly. In the next chapter, I will discuss how this becomes manifest and operates as a

philosophy of communication.

Chapter 3: The Heart of Loving Resistance

As a way to integrate the work of Neil Postman into the philosophy of communication, this project offers Postman's loving resistance fighter as a discourse which provides meaning within the technological landscape. The loving resistance fighter stands as an act which allows communicative agents to think through the world of technopoly. In the previous chapter, I began the discussion *in medias res* of technopoly; in this chapter I begin at the end of *Technopoly* (1992). *In media res* of *Technopoly* gave us the *why* for loving resistance. This chapter seeks to indicate the *what* of loving resistance. This chapter grapples with the following question: for those willing to engage in loving resistance, what are the forms of loving resistance?

To answer this question in the verbiage of the philosophy of communication, this chapter addresses the notion of "Heart" (Arnett & Holba, 2012, p. 9). In Chapter 2, I discussed how loving resistance operates as an act set within the scene of technopoly. Because of the power of technopoly, resistance can seem as if it were a fool's errand. However, the notion of heart points to the practices which give rise and shape or our identity (Arnett & Holba, 2012, p. 10). What one does, in terms of practices, shapes who we are and who we are to become. Communicative agents do not come into the world as fully formed beings. Agents arise out of practices. Unfortunately, according to Postman, the culture of technopoly delimits practices. Despite this, Postman offers loving resistance as a way to respond to technopoly's boundaries. He does not offer a way to smash the boundaries; instead, he offers a way to live within them. As Arnett and Holba (2012) write, "The practice of taking a stand against the inevitable permits one to engage in an element of dignity at a moment when life seems uncontrollable" (p. 10). Technopoly is inevitable, but loving resistance allows for dignity in a world that is beyond the control of a

single person. Loving resistance offers a way to take that stance against the inevitable. In this chapter, I discuss what that stance looks like.

Introduction

Technopoly (1992) offers a call to action. In that call to action, Neil Postman constructs a scene-act ratio in which the scene of technopoly demands the act of loving resistance. *Technopoly* presents the ten acts of loving resistance as though the acts of loving resistance operate in a self-evident way, and Postman leaves it up to the reader to determine how to invoke or act as a loving resistance fighter. He admits this explicitly and writes, "I can say no more than this, for each person must decide how to enact these ideas" (Postman, 1992, p. 185). Consequently, this leaves much unsaid as to what constitutes a loving resistance fighter. Moreover, Postman's conception of loving resistance, according to one critic, constitutes an "individualistic stance" which "is too amorphous and romanticized to result in any social change" (Groswiler, 2015, p. 298). Much of media ecology literature and research focuses on media ecology education as a response to technopoly (see Groswiler, 2015; Forsberg, 2017; Plugh, 2017; Rose, 2015; Tywoniak, 2017). However, this viewing media ecology education as a source of liberation ignores the fact that much of media ecology seeks to disavow moral judgment of media and technology (Cali, 2017; Postman, 2006; Strate, 2020; Strate, 2017b; Strate 2006; Lum, 2006). The loving resistance fighter is not limited to those practicing, studying, and developing media ecology. Keeping loving resistance within the tradition of media ecology limits the act of loving resistance. Limiting loving resistance would operate as counterproductive in relation to Postman's end. Articulating the act of loving resistance in the face of technopoly necessitates the enactment of loving resistance, and enacting loving resistance cannot remain confined to the scope of the scholarly tradition of media ecology. Postman's

decision to list the tenets of loving resistance as ten specific commandments, and Postman's proclivity toward social and cultural criticism (Strate, 2017a) naturally suggest that loving resistance should operate beyond the bounds of academia.

However, acting and practicing loving resistance demands that we expand upon the meaning of each act of loving resistance Postman described. By elevating and offering meaning to the acts of loving resistance, we allow specific practices to take form, and we allow the heart of Postman's philosophy of communication to emerge. Therefore, this chapter offers an exegesis of Neil Postman's loving resistance fighter. Through this exegesis, we can move to the heart of the loving resistance fighter and discover the practices inherent to loving resistance.

In this chapter, I make two interrelated claims. First, the loving resistance fighter operates as a terminological reduction, a metonym (Burke (1945/1962) for the practices of which can resist the forces of technopoly. Second, although Postman does not articulate these practices of resistance in detail, an interpretive reading of the loving resistance fighter reveals that loving resistance embraces the "unity of contraries" (Buber, 1965/1966) and the petit narratives (Lyotard, 1984) inherent to the postmodern condition, while, at the same time works loving resistance works against the secular trinity of modernity—progress, efficiency, and individual autonomy (Arnett, 2013). Both claims move the loving resistance fighter into a philosophy of communication which confronts the crisis of technopoly.

This chapter will proceed in the following way. First, I offer the loving resistance fighter as a metonym which arises from Postman's use of the scene-act ratio in *Technopoly* (1992). In essence, Postman reduces the act of resisting technopoly to the term loving resistance fighter. Second, I offer an exegesis of the term loving resistance fighter. This exegesis interprets the meaning embedded in the loving resistance fighter and expands our knowledge of what

constitutes loving resistance, moving loving resistance into the realm of a postmodern unity of contraries that respond to the secular trinity. Third, I offer some conclusions about the practices inherent to loving resistance allowing for the loving resistance fighter to emerge, not as an act, but as narratives that provide us the *who* of loving resistance. Once we understand what is loving resistance and who is a loving resistance fighter, we can begin to think carefully about how to respond to the forces of technopoly and the secular trinity.

Loving Resistance as Metonym

In this section, I continue to examine the rhetoricity of *Technopoly* and the loving resistance fighter. I continue to use the work of Kenneth Burke to elucidate the rhetorical plea made within Postman's work. In particular, I contend that the loving resistance fighter operates as a metonym, or reduction, of practices. The term loving resistance fighter highlights the necessary acts and practices necessary to respond to the culture of technopoly. Moreover, since Postman reduces responses to technopoly to the act of loving resistance, we need to expand our understanding of loving resistance, if we wish to contend with the forces of technopoly in a productive manner. The notion of expansion require an exegesis of loving resistance.

At the end of *A Grammar of Motives*, Burke (1945/1962) offers four appendices. The final appendix Burke calls "Four Master Tropes" (1945/1962, p. 503). In this appendix, Burke identifies four tropes (metaphor, metonymy, synecdoche, and irony) which help the critic to make discoveries about philosophy, language, and literature. Traditionally, a trope refers to the figurative or metaphorical use of language. However, Burke discourages readers from restricting the four tropes to the realm of poetry and literature. Examination of the four tropes allows a critic to uncover the motives embedded in philosophy and science. He contends that there are "'literal' or 'realistic' applications of the four tropes" (Burke, 1945/1962, p. 503). For example, metaphor

functions as a substitution for perspective, and Burke provides an example of how the notion of perspective operates in a scientific realm. Burke (1945/1962) writes, "[F]or instance, human motivation may, with varying degrees of relevance and reward, be considered in terms of conditional reflexes, or chemicals, or the class struggles, or the love of God, or neurosis" (p. 504). Put another way, theoretical or scientific perspective operates as a metaphor. It places a phenomenon in terms of something else, or as Burke (1945/1962) states, "It brings out the thisness of a that, or the thatness of a this" (p. 503). Metaphor offers a perspective. When a phenomenon confuses us, we place it in terms of something else. Therefore, even pure scientific explanations rely on the notion of metaphor, and even though science might try to disabuse figurative language, Burke contends that scientific discourse cannot escape it.

Importantly, Burke notes an interrelation among the four tropes. Burke (1945/1962) writes, "Give a man but one of them, tell him to exploit its possibilities, and if he is thorough in doing so, he will come upon the other three" (p. 503). Postman made metaphors central to his media ecology (see Postman 1979; 1985; 1988a). Postman applied metaphors to specific mediums and utilized metaphor to explicate his understanding of media ecology. When Postman (1985) claims that the medium is the metaphor. He argues that each particular medium offers a different perspective. Print offers rationality, and television offers nonsense as a form of entertainment. A shift in metaphor constitutes a shift in perspective. Moreover, in *Technopoly*, Postman (1992) argues that computer and medical technology has created a human-as-a-machine metaphor. From this perspective, if a human has defective parts, then science and technology can replace those parts. While this project does not seek to uncover all of the metaphors within Neil Postman's media ecology, this project does acknowledge how Postman uses metaphors throughout his corpus, and because Postman used metaphor, he invites, according Burke, the use

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of metonymy. Consequently, the loving resistance fighter functions as a metonymy of acts which one can use when one is within the scene of technopoly.

Burke defines metonymy as a reduction (1945/1962, p. 503). Moreover, he writes, "The basic 'strategy' in metonymy is this: to convey some incorporeal or intangible state in terms or the corporeal or tangible" (Burke, 1945/1962, p. 506). The following example proves illstruative. In writing about the actions of poet, Burke (1945/1962) writes, "He knows that 'shame,' for instance, is not merely a 'state,' but a movement of the eye, a color of the cheek, a certain quality of voice and a set of the muscle" (p. 507). Going back to the notion of love discussed in Chapter 1, it does not stand as a state per se, but it operates as a reduction of a collection of characteristics. For the poet, Burke claims that metonymy works "as a *terminological* reduction" (1945/1962, p. 507, emphasis in original). The term, love or shame, reduces the collection of behaviors down, not to a single idea, but a single term. Consequently, love or shame can describe a variety of behaviors, but not every behavior, unless the poet does the specific work to reduce different behaviors to a single term.

The loving resistance fighter operates as a terminological reduction as well. It forms a metonymy of behavior, or as I stated earlier, acts. Certainly, a reduction will obfuscate and eliminate certain characteristics, but herein lies the role of the critic. As Burke noted the role of the critic is to uncover the ratios embedded in a text to reveal the purpose and motives of the text. The philosophy of communication does not always fully embrace the notion of criticism; it certainly does not embrace criticism for criticism's sake. However, philosophy of communication does seek to provide meaning to discourse, and utilizes the term *interpretation* rather than criticism (Arnett & Holba, 2012). Therefore, because Postman reduces acting against the tide of technopoly to the term loving resistance fighter, philosophy of communication should

expand upon the meaning of that term. It is not a matter of criticism; it is a matter of elucidation and bringing forward the *what* of the term; the practices of loving resistance as a philosophy of communication. Bringing forward the what of loving resistance requires an *expansion* of the term; it should pull out meaning from the term. This becomes a matter of exegesis.

My use of the term exegesis is deliberate. The philosophy of communication stresses the importance of hermeneutics to open and create meaning through interpretation (Arnett & Holba, 2012, p. 85; Arnett, Fritz, & Bell, 2009, p. 36). Therefore, the use of the term hermeneutics might operate more fittingly with this project than the term exegesis. However, exegesis operates as a better fit for this project. First, Postman articulates the ten attributes of a loving resistance fighter as an homage and allusion to the Decalogue, the Ten Commandments. The term exegesis refers to a critical interpretation of texts, especially scripture (Nash, 2014, p. 80). *Technopoly* is not a holy text, and I am not arguing that Postman's work creates meaning in the same way as scripture. However, the term exegesis offers some respect to Postman's authorial intent. His respect for and fascination with the Decalogue demands that the critic treat the text with care, and my use of the term exegesis, hopefully, respects Postman's intentions. I do not wish to make loving resistance into something new entirely, because that would slouch toward deconstructionism, which Postman viewed with skepticism (1995, p. 25; 1999, p. 78). This is not to suggest that the deconstructionist turn correlates with hermeneutics. My argument on this point is that exegesis fits nicely within Postman's written corpus and operates within his intent.

In addition, the term exegesis works well when we remind ourselves that Postman operates as a rhetor. In the previous chapter, I argued that Postman's work in *Technopoly* functioned not just as a work in media ecology. *Technopoly* also asserted itself as a rhetorical text, and Neil Postman, above all else, functioned as a social and cultural critic who used media

ecology toward the end of social criticism (Strate, 2017a). Moreover, Postman acknowledged the importance of rhetoric to make compelling moral arguments about the nature of media and its influence on culture. Within academia, the term exegesis recognizes that the person providing the exegesis directs it to scholars within the field (Nash, 2014, p. 81). Exegesis need not be confined to one particular realm; it helps to illuminate a text to a group of scholars without committing itself to a specific interpretive perspective. Without a particular interpretive perspective, exegesis allows the rhetorical force of the argument to convince others of the meaning of the original text. As an additional benefit to exegesis, since it is not committed to a specific philosophical perspective and relies on rhetorical force, exegesis avoids nitpicking and hand wringing as to whether the method was appropriately applied by the critic. Exegesis allows the rhetorical force of the interpretation to stand on its own and allows the community of scholars in both media ecology and philosophy of communication to judge the appropriateness of the claims. As I bridge philosophy of communication and media ecology by drawing loving resistance fighter into the philosophy of communication, exegesis allows for scholars working within both traditions to evaluate the claims.

Recognizing that the loving resistance fighter operates as a rhetorically constructed metonymy honors the text of *Technopoly*. Neil Postman spent his entire academic career seeking to elucidate the consequences of media and technology on the human condition. Dismissing his articulation of the loving resistance fighter as a romantic individualistic flight of fancy ignores Postman's larger corpus. As Strate (2017a) identified, *Technopoly* operated as Postman's final work on media and technology, and Postman felt as though he had no more to say on the subject. The work of an interpreter should be to place the text into the historical moment in order to bring meaning to the world (Arnett & Holba, 2012). Acknowledge the loving resistance fighter as a

reduction of something larger allows for the expansion of the term and to bring meaning as to how to cope with technopoly. Interpretation and expansion of the term allows one to continue the conversation on technopoly. Dismissing the loving resistance fighter ignores the fact that Postman believed we could find hope within technopoly.

Exegesis of Loving Resistance

In this section, I construct an exegesis of loving resistance and the loving resistance fighter. As a starting point, I utilize the ten tenets (acts) of the loving resistance fighter. From those tenets, I connect the loving resistance fighter to the philosophy of communication. Loving resistance creates a way to understand how one can respond to the demands of technopoly. A response to technopoly through loving resistance, as this exegesis illustrates, embraces the unity of contraries, the postmodern condition. Loving resistance values language, humanistic inquiry, and common sense. Loving resistance also remains skeptical of modernity by refusing to embrace progress, efficiency, and individual autonomy.

Neil Postman identifies the following precepts as the markers of those who engage in the act of loving resistance. Loving resistance fighters are people:

who pay no attention to a poll unless they know what questions were asked and why;

who refuse to accept efficiency as the pre-eminent goal of human relations;

who have freed themselves from the belief in the magical powers of numbers, do not regard calculation as an adequate substitute for judgment, or precision as a synonym for truth;

who refuse to allow psychology or any "social science" to pre-empt the language and thought of common sense;

who are, at least, suspicious of the idea of progress, and who do not confuse information

with understanding;

who do not regard the aged as irrelevant;

who take seriously the meaning of family loyalty and honor, and who, when they "reach

out and touch someone," expect that person to be in the same room;

who take the great narratives of religion seriously and who do not believe that science is

the only system of thought capable of producing truth;

who know the difference between the sacred and the profane, and who do not wink at

tradition for modernity's sake;

who admire technological ingenuity but do not think it represents the highest form of

human achievement. (Postman, 1992, p. 183-184).

However, Postman does not explain why he ordered these precepts in this particular way, and as a result, much is left unsaid about each precept and how the precepts of loving resistance work together. In this section, along with my exegesis, I will offer a reordering of the acts of loving resistance in order to provide clarity to loving resistance and to draw the loving resistance fighter into the philosophy of communication.

Although Postman was fascinated and influenced by the Decalogue, unlike the Decalogue the ten precepts of the loving resistance fighter does not seem to have a hierarchy. The First Commandment of the Decalogue is "Thou shalt have no other gods before me." When one accepts this commandment the rest of the commandments fall into place. If one accepts no other god but God, then one must necessarily follow the remaining commandments. However, Postman does not order his precepts of loving resistance in the same way. Therefore, expansion and interpretation of the metonym of the loving resistance fighter necessitates a reordering along

with interpretation. The act of reordering could even function as an interpretation itself because the reordering brings about a different meaning to the ten precepts.

As illustrated below, I expand on the loving resistance fighter by connecting it to the philosophy of communication. I announce the connection between the loving resistance fighter and the philosophy of communication in the following subheadings and offer the precept of the loving resistance fighter which supports the announcement. After each precept, I offer an exegesis to demonstrate the connection. I admit that this formatting certainly reveals a print bias and may seem incoherent in other mediums. However, using the biases of print to expand on Postman's ideas seems fitting since he spent much of his career lauding the virtues of print.

Loving Resistance Fighter: A Unity of Contraries

The loving resistance fighter as a unity of contraries is illustrated in the following precept: "who admire technological ingenuity but do not think it represents the highest possible form of human achievement" (Postman, 1992, p. 184). As stated previously, some within the tradition of media ecology have labeled Postman as a Luddite or a neo-Luddite, but this precept of the loving resistance fighter serves as a clear reminder that Postman did not stand as a pure and unadulterated Luddite. Those that participated in the Luddite movement were known to smash machinery and technology, but this does not represent Postman's telos nor the telos of the loving resistance fighter. Remember that the loving resistance fighter maintains a distance from technological innovation and ingenuity. Distance does not equate to destruction. The loving resistance fighter does not advocate for a life without technology. On the other hand, though, the loving resistance fighter keeps technology at a distance, and because they keep technology at a distance, technological development does not equate to the ultimate human endeavor. In this

sense, the loving resistance fighter's stance toward technology offers what Martin Buber (1965/1966) called a "unitary of contraries" (p. 111).

Appreciation of technical ingenuity keeps the loving resistance fighter from becoming polemic. Since technology operates as the root cause for the formulation of a technopoly and since technopoly saps our humanistic resources (such as narratives), it becomes hard not to view Postman's corpus as a diatribe against technology. However, this precept reminds the loving resistance fighter that the lauding of technological development and ingenuity is inevitable. Technopoly has taken hold, and because of this, people will always praise technological development. The loving resistance fighter need not refuse technology—as a luddite would—and can appreciate some aspects of technological development. The loving resistance fighter can think about what technology can do well. Herein lies the supposed contradiction of the loving resistance fighter. It may seem oxymoronic to speak against technopoly and still appreciate technology. However, this contradiction forms a unity of contraries.

It becomes important to note that Postman does not disavow technology. In 1988, Neil Postman gave an interview with *C-Span* to promote *Amusing Ourselves to Death*. *Amusing Ourselves to Death* offers an incisive critique of television, but in the interview, Postman claimed to love television and believed that television provided people a wonderful opportunity to watch movies and sports (C-SPAN, 1988). The problem with television rests in the fact that the television medium promotes an environment of entertainment, and when we place serious matters on television, the medium will inevitably push those serious matters into entertainment. This is why, in that same interview, Postman called television news and the production of televised presidential debates an embarrassment. News and politics are serious subject matters

and should be conducted through a medium which can promote the rationality that news and politics demand, such as a print medium.

The loving resistance fighter does not find technological pursuits as an inevitably bad endeavor. Given that Postman viewed language as a technology (Gencarelli, 2006, p. 242), we can say that Postman himself views some technologies as worth protecting and promoting. Language would be one of those technologies. Moreover, Postman's media ecology privileged the print medium (Gencarelli, 2006, p. 241). Lauding these technologies became Postman's modus operandi, especially when a particular medium, such as television, began to dominate the social and cultural landscape. Avowing some technologies while disavowing other technologies may appear as a contradiction. A critical look at Postman's corpus might ask why he could laud print, when print gave rise to the technological developments which led to technopoly. The "unity of contraries" gives us an insight into the apparent contradiction.

Martin Buber's unitary of contraries has a prominent role within the philosophy of communication, communication ethics, interpersonal communication, and communication theory (Arnett & Holba, 2012; Arnett, Fritz, & Bell, 2009; Arnett, 1986; Wood, 2007). A purely modern approach to Postman and the loving resistance fighter would hold that respect for technology and technopoly should stand as inherently inconsistent. However, the unitary of contraries reminds us that the loving resistance fighter operates within technopoly and cannot stand above technopoly to demand that technopoly conform to the resistance fighter's ways. The loving resistance fighter can appreciate technology, but the loving resistance fighter must be aware the technology can shift the entire environment. Since technology can shift the environment in deleterious ways (television turning politics into entertainment), the loving resistance fighter cannot and should not think of television as the highest form of human achievement and allow television to enter

into every human arena. As a unitary of contraries, the loving resistance fighter adds meaning to our discourse and interaction with technology. It adds meaning to how we utilize technology in our day-to-day interactions as we communicate with others. As such, the loving resistance fighter fits within the philosophy of communication as a unity of contraries.

In addition, as mentioned previously, Strate (1994) argued that Neil Postman served as a champion of the modern during the postmodern period. Neil Postman as a modern postmodern thinker or as a postmodern modern thinker aptly illustrates Buber's concept of the unitary of contraries. The intellectual project of the Enlightenment, in particular the moderate Enlightenment, contains deleterious notions which are detrimental to the human condition (Gare, 2006). The moderate Enlightenment as an antecedent to the secular trinity of modernity allowed for an overvaluation of progress, efficiency, and individual autonomy; the moderate Enlightenment allowed for the unchecked privilege of progress, efficiency and individual autonomy (Arnett, Fritz, & Holba, 2007). As a champion of the modern, Postman inevitably lauds some of these values. In particular, his praise of print as a technology, environment, and culture cannot escape the fact that print fostered the notion of individualism (McLuhan, 1962; Ong 1982/2002). In the opening of *Technopoly*, Postman praises how technology allowed for a longer and cleaner life; this praise that Postman offered stands as a praise of the progress engendered by technology. Even the loving resistance fighter, admittedly embodies a strain of individualism because Postman suggests that the loving resistance fighter can act irrespective of the larger culture. However, Postman does not push these values as the highest achievements related to the human endeavor. Instead, Postman and the loving resistance fighter serves as a check on the worst impulses of modernity. In this way, the loving resistance fighter can possess a love of print, but, at the same time the loving resistance fighter does not see print as the highest

form of human achievement. We praise the technology for what it can protect and promote, and print can protect and promote rationality and human reasoning. Even though print has a long standing relationship with modernity, we can recover the sense of purpose offered by print, if we think of print as a counter-environment to technopoly. Technopoly provides for us by asking for very little effort, or, at the very least, technopoly offers a promise of a clean, convenient, and easy life. Print does not offer the convenience and comforts proposed by technopoly. Print offers rationality, and we can praise print for this.

Putting all of this together, the loving resistance fighter does not operate as a Luddite seeking to destroy all technological innovation. The loving resistance fighter does not reject technology sight unseen. Instead, the loving resistance fighter seeks to ask hard questions about the nature of technology. Even though the technology might carry with it magnificent ingenuity, the loving resistance fighter stops and asks what the technology does as a medium or environment. The loving resistance fighter looks for the unintended consequences. This skepticism about technology might lead others to view the loving resistance fighter as a Luddite because skepticism toward technological innovation stands as antithetical to technopoly. Others might snarkily ask the loving resistance fighter why he or she does not just abandon technology altogether. This type of criticism likes to note the performative contradiction of utilizing technology while criticizing it. However, if the loving resistance fighter remembers to embrace the unity of contraries of loving resistance. One becomes a loving resistance fighter by remembering that some aspects of technology might be praiseworthy, but technology does not stand tantamount to human achievement. When this happens, the loving resistance fighter can embrace the modern, while still allowing for a multiplicity of perspectives.

Although Postman listed this precept last in his list of loving resistance, this precept should come first as we expand on the meaning of the metonym of loving resistance. Having some skepticism toward technology and embracing the unity of contraries becomes a starting point for the act of loving resistance. While loving resistance finds itself *in medias res* of technopoly, loving resistance begins with an understanding of the limits of technology, but loving resistance also acknowledges that some elements of some technologies can help us survive technopoly. For Postman, language and print are two such technologies (Gencarelli, 2006).

The Loving Resistance Fighter Recognizes the Postmodern Condition

The following two precepts illustrate how the loving resistance fighter acknowledges the postmodern condition: loving resistance fighters are those "who take the great narratives of religion seriously and who do not believe that science is the only system of thought capable of producing truth; who know the difference between the sacred and the profane, and who do not wink at tradition for modernity's sake" (Postman, 1992, p. 184). Within *Technopoly* Postman (1992) bemoans the decline of narratives, and, in particular, he laments technolopical culture's rendering irrelevant the narratives of religion. In a technopoly, religion loses its ability to shape moral and ethical conduct of cultures and communities. Because religious narratives do not stand up to scientific scrutiny, technopoly renders those religious narratives meaningless. This development within technolopical culture would not be nefarious if science and social science were able to piece together a coherent moral worldview, but as it stands, scientific inquiry into human endeavors cannot do this. Postman does not suggest that we discount science or scientific inquiry, but he believes that we should temper our faith in science and remind ourselves that other forms of inquiry possess the ability to produce truth. Acceptance of multiple forms of

inquiry places the loving resistance fighter wholly within the philosophy of communication and it attends to the issues within postmodernity.

Philosophy of communication recognizes the historicity of thought (Arnett & Holba, 2012). Charles Taylor (1984) emphasized thinking about the historical moment when doing philosophy. Philosophy carries itself out within historical moments, and these historical moments shape the ways in which the philosophy developed, and, in turn, historical moments influence how we develop philosophy. Therefore, the philosophy of communication asks how we assign truth within a particular historical moment. The philosophy of communication recognizes that the good, what a culture decides to protect and promote, also depends on the historical moment. These beliefs embedded within the philosophy of communication do not suggest a form of absolute relativism. Absolute relativism pushes toward nihilism and the belief that everything is meaningless or that every system of thought stands equal to all other systems of thought. On the contrary, philosophy of communication suggests that historicity, the historical moment, or the historical view, can leverage our understanding of a particular view. The historical moment helps those doing philosophy understand why ideas develop.

A technopoly produces only one truth, a faith in technology. Scientific developments and the scientific method produced technological development, so faith in technology also means faith in the scientific method undergirding technology. However, the loving resistance fighter recognizes the limitations of this faith in the scientific method. Faith in technology and the belief that only science can produce truth are situated historically and culturally, and the loving resistance fighter recognizes this. The philosophy undergirding scientific investigation, Cartesian thinking, developed during a historical moment in which there might have been an overreliance on tradition. This overreliance of tradition demanded a move to scientific investigation. In a

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technopoly, however, the culture has placed far too much faith in scientific investigation, and the culture expects science to provide answers to questions that the narratives of religion are better suited to answer. Truth and meaning are not relative, but they are contingent on the historical moment. In a technopoly, the culture forgets the contingency of truth and meaning, but the loving resistance fighter remembers this contingency.

Postmodernity marks our contemporary scene and historical moment. French philosopher Jean-Francois Lyotard in *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* (1984) describes postmodernity as "incredulity toward metanarratives" (p. xxiv). Skepticism toward grand and master narratives marks postmodernity. As an example, postmodern thinking views both capitalism and Marxism with skepticism. Even though most might view the perspectives in opposition to one another, both systems of thought—and the narratives that guide those systems—bind themselves to modern thinking and economic determinism. Both systems of thought utilize scientific inquiry to support their respective conclusions. Both systems predicate themselves on the belief that one can accumulate scientific knowledge as a way to support and create a just society.

Since the loving resistance fighter believes that the other systems of truth possess the power and ability to produce truth, the loving resistance fighter acknowledges the postmodern condition. The loving resistance fighter views scientific inquiry with skepticism, especially when people apply that form of inquiry to human relations and ethical and moral decision-making. For the loving resistance fighter, science alone cannot provide a complete system of thought or a just society. The loving resistance fighter gives religion and humanistic inquiry a chance. Remember, technopoly operates as a "totalitarian technocracy" (Postman, 1992, p. 48). It becomes a totalizing force. By giving the narratives of religion a space to produce truth, the loving

resistance fighter pushes against the totalizing force of scientific inquiry and scientific method. Lyotard (1984) wrote, "Let us wage a war on totality; let us be witnesses to the unpresentable; let us activate the differences and save the honor of the name" (p. 82). The loving resistance fighter operates as a reduction of postmodern thinking. Although Postman himself would be reluctant to utilize the term postmodern, the loving resistance fighter activates postmodern thinking through the resistance to the totality of technocracy, through an acknowledgement of the production of truth from different systems of thought, and by giving honor to that which deserves honor.

Lyotard ties modernity to science. Science operates as a "discourse of legitimation" (1984, p. xxiii). Science legitimizes itself; it makes itself truthful through the lens of its own narrative. Science created a vision of itself that views narratives with skepticism; "Science has always been in conflict with narratives. Judged by the yardstick of science, the majority of them prove to be fables" (Lyotard, 1984, p. xxiii). However, scientific thought, and the philosophies undergirding them, constructs a narrative of itself that science can legitimate, or make true according to its own grand narrative. Lyotard offers the Enlightenment narrative as an example. The Enlightenment created the "hero of knowledge" striving "toward a good ethico-political end—universal peace" (Lyotard, 1984, p. xxiv). Science gives this narrative legitimacy. Scientific inquiry allows one to become a hero of knowledge through rigorous testing of hypotheses, and through a rigorous testing of hypotheses, one will possess the ability to create a complete picture of the truth. With a complete picture of the truth, individuals and community can create peace on Earth, unlike the supposed fables of religion. Religion does not have the legitimacy of rigorous scientific testing, and, as a result, it becomes reduced to a fable under the grand narrative of scientific inquiry.

Since religion becomes nothing more than a fable within modernity, the narratives of religion no longer remain sacred. When those narratives of religion move out of the realm of the sacred, one can view those narratives with the same degree of reverence as the profane. A fable, after all, is just a made-up story. Consequently, we can confuse the sacred with the profane—the the consecrated with the unconsecrated, or we can give both the sacred and profane equal weight. Within modernity stories about sexual activity such as the Song of Songs holds the same weight as D.H. Lawrence's *Lady Chatterley's Lover* (Postman, 1988a). Both are stories about human sexuality, but since neither were developed through scientific inquiry, then modernity keeps them as nothing more than stories. Those operating within modernity contend that Alfred Kinsey's studies contain something closer to the real truth about human sexuality (Postman, 1988a). Therefore, within modernity, one can simply wink at tradition. Since the sacred functions no differently than the profane, it becomes possible to disregard the former since it is no different than the latter.

The loving resistance fighter, by holding religion as a system capable of producing truth remembers the difference between the sacred and profane. The loving resistance fighter, through an embodiment of postmodern thinking, can hold both science and religion as truthful, if one can remember the historical developments that produced both. The loving resistance fighter does not hold science and religion as equal partners in creating truth, but the loving resistance fighter recognizes where tradition works to produce truth and where science works to produce truth. This aspect of the loving resistance fighter is an embodiment of the philosophy of communication as well. One can use history to leverage meaning from philosophical, religious, and scientific discourse. A technopoly asks its citizens to forget the historical moment and how historical moments produce systems of truth which respond to real situations. The loving

resistance fighter remembers the historical moment. Consequently, the loving resistance fighter embraces postmodernity—even though Postman viewed postmodernity with skepticism—and, because loving resistance embraces postmodernity, loving resistance becomes a philosophy of communication that can produce communicative practices situated for our historical moment.

The Loving Resistance Fighter Values Language

The following precept illustrates why the loving resistance fighter values language: those "who pay no attention to a poll unless they know what questions were asked and why" (Postman, 1992, p. 183). The loving resistance fighter recognizes that questions function as a technology. Postman (1992) writes, "Questions, then, are like computers or television or stethoscopes or lie detectors, in that they are mechanisms that give direction to our thoughts, generate new ideas, venerate old ones, expose facts, or hide them" (p. 127). A poll is a specific type of survey. A survey consists of more than just a battery of questions; a survey also includes the methods of sampling survey respondents and the process of asking questions—the medium, the order, and the nature of the questions. Inherently, the survey mediates the opinion, and the instrument used (the questionnaire) to collect opinion informs the nature of the information obtained by the instrument (McQuarrie, 2016, p. 189). The loving resistance fighter recognizes the inherent characteristics of questions and the polling process, and, as a result they approach polls with a degree of skepticism. The skepticism of the loving resistance fighter generates not from a familiarity of sampling procedure (although knowledge of sampling procedures could prove helpful), but from a familiarity with the general nature of language. Language, which is a technology (a human invention), most closely resembles machine technology when we construct questions (Postman, 1992, p. 125). Consequently, one acts as a loving resistance fighter when one gives careful attention to questions, and, importantly, language.

This element of the loving resistance fighter suggests that the loving resistance fighter cares about language. In this way, Postman calls for us to care about how we use language, and, in this sense, Postman's fascination with language, general semantics, and Alfred Korzybski emerges as part of the loving resistance fighter. In *Crazy Talk, Stupid Talk*, Postman (1976) declares the importance of language, "Our language structures the very way we see, and any significant change in our ways of talking can lead to a change in point of view" (p. xiv). Language does this, not because language contains bits or pieces of information, but because language operates in and creates a semantic environment (Postman, 1976, p. 8). A poll creates its own semantic environment because a poll and pollsters have specific purposes, and those specific purposes create knowledge, which is not necessarily scientifically objective, but reflective of the semantic environment. Without knowledge of the questions and reasons behind the questions, one cannot presume that the information collected is meaningful. For example, a politician's standing or reputation with the public (approval or disapproval), while some might find it interesting, tells us nothing about the policies of that politician. Even if that opinion poll says something about the sampled audience, it only provides a snapshot; it speaks to how that audience looks at a particular moment. Unfortunately, in a technopoly, where numbers are given the ultimate credence, we have a tendency to forget about the language and semantic environment inherent to the poll. The loving resistance fighter, however, acts in a way which remains vigilant regarding not only the numbers of the poll, but also the language embedded within the poll.

Going back to the notion of metonymy, we can see how this element of the loving resistance fighter reduces much of Postman's work on language and general semantics. Certainly, the precept of pushing against the process of polling works to resist the invisible

technologies of a technopoly. However, questions cannot exist without language, and throughout his career, as I identified in Chapter 1, Postman gave a significant portion of his attention to language. This element reminds us to think carefully about the language used to construct questions, but we should not stop there. The loving resistance fighter resists technopoly when the give thought, consideration, and attention to language.

The Loving Resistance Fighter Embraces Narrative and Humanistic Inquiry (Media Ecology)

The following precept of loving resistance illustrates the high regard given to narrative and humanistic inquiry: those "who have freed themselves from the belief in the magical powers of numbers, do not regard calculation as an adequate substitute for judgment, or precision as a synonym for truth" (Postman, 1992, p. 184). Social science, which relies on calculation and precision to arrive at what might be called the truth, does not hold the only position of privilege in determining truths about human behavior. This does not mean that social science—which stands on the shoulders of numerical calculation—becomes irrelevant, useless, or trivial, but social science operates as one of a variety of ways one can tell and weave a narrative about human behavior and human communication (Postman, 1988a). The primacy of the belief in numbers makes truth synonymous with calculation and pushes social sciences as the arbiter and teller of truth. Instead, the loving resistance fighter believes that one can arrive at truth through humanistic inquiry.

The loving resistance fighter does not give presumption to the social sciences and numerical calculation. Because of this, we can read the loving resistance fighter as a metonym for the practices of media ecology. Postman defined media ecology many times throughout his career, but the constant throughout all of his definitions of media ecology was that media

ecology investigates media as environments. Therefore, media ecology concerns itself with elucidating the social, cognitive, and political consequences of the media environment (Postman, 1988a, p. 5). Media ecology should not shy away from drawing conclusions about human behavior and communication, even though it does not rely on quantification. Media ecology should actively embrace "the role of creators and narrators of social myth" (Postman, 1988a, p. 17). Media ecologists should not have misgivings about the lack of quantification in their studies and should embrace the rhetorical force of their arguments to tell a compelling story about the consequences of media (Postman, 1988a, p. 17). The loving resistance fighter does not have to declare oneself as a media ecologist, but media ecology, and its commitment to narrative, becomes manifest in the loving resistance fighter.

If we combine recognizing the importance of language with a commitment to media ecology, the loving resistance fighter can use the power of narrative to discuss the human condition. I do not suggest that the loving resistance fighter can stand astride human history and our existence in technopoly, but I do suggest that the loving resistance fighter allows us to, in the words of David J. Gunkel (2007), think otherwise. Although Gunkel embraces deconstruction in ways Postman would find problematic, thinking otherwise promotes thinking beyond the accepted precepts around a point of contention. The loving resistance fighter, employing the spirit of media ecology and general semantics can construct meaning outside of the methodological principles of the social sciences, and, therefore, provides a counter to the dominance of technopical culture. Loving resistance allows for the creation of narratives to produce truth.

The Loving Resistance Fighter Embraces Common Sense

The following precept illustrates how loving resistance embraces common sense: those "who refuse to allow psychology or any "social science" to preempt the language and thought of common sense" (Postman, 1992, p. 184). Common sense emerges as an important concept within the philosophy of communication. Common sense gives meaning to communicative practices within a community (Arnett & Holba, 2012, p. 211). Communicative practices and communicative action do not stand above the world; they do not impose order on the world as if the world itself has no influence on practices and action. On the contrary, communicative practices and action dwell in the world, and more specifically, they dwell within a community. As a result, the common sense of a community gives meaning to communication, and communication gives rise to common sense. Postman's derision of psychology and social science and praise of common sense fits within the philosophy of communication. Much ofpsychology and social sciences are predicated on the notion of objectivity. Through objective methodology, which is synonymous with scientific method within psychology and social science, one can become a rational decision-maker, a person able to master every decision laid out in front of an individual actor. However, this methodology ignores the knowledge embedded within the community. Despite one's supposed mastery of information, the community makes sense of communicative practices and action. The community gives these practices and actions meaning. Postman's loving resistance fighter serves as a warning against over-reliance on psychology and social sciences because they might not give consideration to the common sense which gives meaning to communicative action.

As a metonym, the loving resistance fighter reduces a general skepticism toward faith in numbers, and at the same time, the loving resistance fighter embraces and acknowledges the role of community in decision-making and sense making. We do not stand above the world, but we

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live in it. Calculation, precision, and blind reliance on social science to tell our stories leaves us with the false promise that we can stand above it, but the loving resistance fighter reminds us that we live in it and stand with common sense.

The Loving Resistance Fighter Does Not Place Blind Faith in the Goodness of Progress

The following precept illustrates why loving resistance does not view progress as an accepted good: those "who are, at least, suspicious of the idea of progress, and who do not confuse information with understanding" (Postman, 1992, p. 184). The loving resistance fighter rejects the values inherent to moderate Enlightenment. Arnett, Fritz, and Holba (2007) argue that the values of the moderate Enlightenment produced deleterious effects on contemporary communicative practices. Arnett, Fritz, and Holba, drawing from the work of Arran Gare (2006), draw the distinction between radical Enlightenment and moderate Enlightenment. Radical Enlightenment offers a continuation of the practices of the Renaissance, a freedom from the tyranny of the Church and aristocracy (Arnett, Fritz, and Holba, 2007, p. 116). On the other hand, moderate Enlightenment offered a triumph of the individual and individualism. This triumph suggests that the individual can stand above the ground of community and should have absolute freedom to increase pleasure and reduce pain (Arnett, Fritz, and Holba, 2007, p. 116). Therefore, radical Enlightenment becomes the forbearer to current notions embedded in postmodernism, and moderate Enlightenment functions as the forerunner to modernity.

The moderate Enlightenment propelled forward what Arnett (2013) identifies as the secular trinity (p. 4). The moderate Enlightenment overcorrected the problems embedded in western Christianity and, in the end, replaced the Holy Trinity with a secular one. Arnett, Fritz, and Holba (2007) write, "Moderate Enlightenment fostered ideological blindness, assuming the universal truth, value, and goodness of progress, efficiency, and individual autonomy" (p. 121).

While progress, efficiency, and individual autonomy offered relief from the authority of the church and tradition, within modernity, these values go unquestioned. Progress, efficiency, and individual autonomy become givens of any value system modernity has the ability to articulate.

Postman's resistance to technology and suspicion of progress led one commentator to call Postman (in relation to other scholars within the tradition of media ecology Marshall McLuhan and Walter Ong) "the most pessimistic and most neo-Luddite of the group" (Anton, 2011, p. 84). This charge contains some truth in that Postman called himself a conservative; one could even proffer the charge that Postman was a reactionary in relation to technology and media. Throughout his corpus, Postman bemoaned the liberalization of culture's attitudes toward technological change. Even in *Technopoly*, he lamented that those who opposed technology's imposition on culture became labeled as Luddites. He offered praise for the Luddite movement that opposed the introduction of new technologies in the textile industry. The Luddite movement, according to Postman, had legitimate reasons to react negatively to technological change. He writes, "They were people trying desperately to preserve whatever rights, privileges, laws, and customs had given them justice in the older world-view" (1992, p. 43). By offering praise for the Luddite movement, he rhetorically aligns himself with their positions.

However, this precept of the loving resistance fighter offers a more nuanced understanding of Postman's so-called pessimism and Luddite tendencies. This precept of illustrates how the loving resistance fighter pushes against the secular trinity. The proponents of the secular trinity and the ideas of the secular trinity embedded in our culture view progress as inevitable and good. In the contemporary moment, most view progress and progressivism synonymously with the expansion of rights to all segments of society, but these expansion of rights, as Arnett, Fritz, and Holba (2007) articulate, actually coincide with the radical

Enlightenment. The progress exclaimed by the secular trinity functions to impede the human condition. Singer/songwriter John Prine might best express the type of progress pushed forward by the secular trinity in his 1971 song, "Paradise." In this song, Prine, a Chicago native, laments the destruction of his father and mother's land in western Kentucky by the Peabody Coal Company. Prine sings:

> Then the coal company came with the world's largest shovel
>
> And they tortured the timber and stripped all the land
>
> Well, they dug for their coal till the land was forsaken
>
> Then they wrote it all down as the progress of man. (Prine, 1971)

Progress does not just consist of an expansion of rights. Progress becomes a justification for destruction and extraction. Paradise sits untouched and natural until technology appears. The coal company uses technology to rip through trees and soil to access coal. The company sells or uses the coal to make steel and power electricity. While electricity does (potentially) make life cleaner, longer, and healthier, the loving resistance fighter remembers that this form of progress, a progress viewed synonymously with technological innovation, comes with a cost.

Although Postman (1999) lauded the Enlightenment, this exegesis claims that the loving resistance fighter works to reveal the "Dark Side" of the Enlightenment. (Arnett, Fritz, & Holba, 2007). Progress for progress's sake contains the potential for despair. However, both Charles Taylor (1995) and Hannah Arendt (1958) offer hope in the face of the darkness of radical Enlightenment (Arnett, 2013). By articulating the loving resistance fighter, Postman refuses pessimism. A technopoly demands that those living within its culture knuckle under and surrender to the forces of technology, but the living resistance fighter, by viewing progress with suspicion, keeps hanging onto the hope for a culture and thinking other than technopoly. There

remains something worth fighting for. The loving resistance fighter reminds us that we can have hope. Again, it offers dignity when facing the inevitable.

In addition, the loving resistance fighter offers a counterintuitive take on information. Technology increases the speed of information, the amount of information, and access to information. In our contemporary moment, information becomes a commodity (Lewis, 2010; Rushkoff, 2013). Information becomes something that we can use to our advantage, and as a result, we think information as inherently good. The loving resistance fighter's stance on information stands in stark contrast to this view. Not all information has meaning. Postman (2006) writes, "[T]he speed, volume, and variety of available information serves as a distraction and a moral deficit; we are deluded into thinking that the serious social problems of our time would be solved if only we had more information" (p. 67). We cannot deploy information to solve problems. If this were the case, we would have few problems. We lack meaning, not information.

Philosophy of communication does not treat information as a commodity that one can collect and accumulate. On the contrary, philosophy of communication seeks to situate information by focusing on meaning (Arnett & Holba, 2012, p. 8). An objectivist view of communication, informed by scientific methodology, treats information as something that resides outside of the person. According to this view, an interlocutor or communicator, selects and chooses information to communicate from moment to moment. Philosophy of communication, on the other hand, recognizes and seeks to interpret how people make meaning from and with information. One can collect information, but one cannot collect meaning. Meaning emerges from moment to moment and between person to person (Arnett and Holba, 2012, p. 8). Meaning does not exist outside of the people engaged in meaning making (Cronen & Pearce, 1980).

Through meaning, philosophy of communication allows for understanding. Meaning allows us to apprehend and comprehend our interactions with and orientations toward others. If I understand how I might create meaning with another, then I have a richer understanding of our relationship.

The loving resistance fighter positions itself as a philosophy of communication because it moves our attention away from information and toward understanding and meaning. For the loving resistance fighter, information does not possess inherent meaning; information does not possess inherent understanding. People create meaning and forge meaning into understanding. Moreover, information produces a moral deficit because we cannot make sense of all information. Information lacks moral clarity. However, technopoly leads us to believe that access to information will provide us with clarity, or if we somehow lack information, then we need to find more information which should lead to moral clarity. The loving resistance fighter recognizes this as a fool's errand. Consequently, the loving resistance fighter, the act of loving resistance, focuses our attention on meaning and understanding, and the loving resistance fighter emerges as a philosophy of communication who rejects the belief in the inherent goodness of progress. The loving resistance fighter acknowledges that we have more information, but does not presume that the accumulation of information is a form of progress and/or human betterment.

The Loving Resistance Fighter Does Not Place Blind Faith in Efficiency

The following precept illustrates loving resistance's commitment to rejecting the presumed importance of efficiency: those "who refuse to accept efficiency as the pre-eminent goal of human relations" (Postman, 1992, p. 184). If something is pre-eminent, then we take it to mean that the thing in question surpasses all other qualities. Preeminence explicitly means that the thing in question stands as most important. Therefore, the loving resistance fighter does not accept efficiency to be the most important goal, end, or telos of human relations. The loving

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resistance fighter can hold other values as more important than the notion of efficiency. Postman's loving resistance fighter operates as a reaction to technopoly. The loving resistance fighter offers a way to think beyond and against the givens of a technopoly. If the loving resistance fighter questions the preeminence of efficiency, then technopoly must, in some way value efficiency over all other values. Consequently, the loving resistance fighter pushes against the givens of moderate Enlightenment and, in turn, modernity.

In the last book he wrote before his death, *Building a Bridge to the 18th Century: How the Past Can Improve Our Future* (1999), Postman valorizes the Enlightenment. At the same time, he derides what he calls postmodernism and, in particular, deconstructionism. However, despite his misgivings about postmodernism and championing of Enlightenment, reading *Technopoly* in conjunction with Arnett, Fritz, and Holba (2007) leads to a more nuanced understanding of Postman's work that accounts for the differences between radical Enlightenment and moderate Enlightenment. Postman's rejection of efficiency through the loving resistance fighter, offers a rejoinder to one of the values within the secular trinity and modernity. Strate (1994) calls Postman the champion of the modern in postmodern times. While I agree with Strate's assessment, Postman's work in *Technopoly* does not stand as a wholesale acceptance of the moderate Enlightenment. This distinction becomes important when forwarding the notion of the loving resistance fighter into the philosophy of communication and communication ethics.

Moreover, Postman's view of education as "thermostatic activity" aligns with ideas of radical Enlightenment. In *Teaching as a Conserving Activity* (1979), Postman articulates his thermostatic view of education. This perspective of education argues that education works best when it operates as a thermostat, a regulator which counteracts the surrounding environment. He

writes, "[E]ducation tries to conserve tradition when the rest of the environment is innovative. Or it is innovative when the rest of the society is tradition bound" (Postman, 1979, p. 19). Consequently, although he might repudiate postmodernism, Postman aligns himself with the values of the radical Enlightenment which gave birth to postmodernism. As stated previously, radical Enlightenment rejected the authority of the complete and total power of religion and aristocracy. The thermostatic view of education implies that education should counteract tradition when tradition holds too much sway. His view of the spirit of education comports with the spirit of the radical Enlightenment. Taken together, we can conclude that although Postman champions the Enlightenment, his does not stand as a wholesale acceptance of the moderate Enlightenment.

In addition, as mentioned previously in Chapter 1, Postman's *Technopoly* owes a heavy debt to Jacques Ellul's (1964) work in *The Technological Society*, and, again, Postman acknowledged this debt in the introduction to *Technopoly*. Recall that *technique* refers to what we might call rational efficiency (Ellul, 1964, p. xxv). Efficiency operates as the permanent end of *technique* (Ellul, 1964, p. 21). Under *technique*, all decisions calculus focus on means rather than ends. Choice focuses on the *way* one might complete a task or action, not the end of the decision. *Technique* presupposes the end of efficiency. Efficiency—the quality of being efficient—equates to creating maximum production with minimal effort or energy. When Ellul suggests that efficiency stands as the fixed end of *technique*, he claims that efficiency subordinates all other concerns. Efficiency preempts ethical and aesthetic considerations (Ellul, 1964, p. 74). For example, under *technique* mountaintop removal, or strip-mining, becomes acceptable practice. Removing the top of a mountain provides immediate access to a coal seam. Concern for those living around the mountaintop mine stands a secondary concern.

While some might equate efficiency with the progress of man, there stands an inherent danger in keeping efficiency as the fixed end of economic, organizational, and human relations. The focus on means, which becomes a science of selecting means based upon numerical calculation, elides serious issues. Ellul (1964) writes, "This science extends to greatly diverse areas; it ranges from the act of shaving to the act of organizing the landing in Normandy, or to the cremating thousands of deportees" (p. 21). By focusing on efficiency, science grounded in numerical calculation, focuses on the question, "Can we do it?" instead of the question "Should we do it?" In the instance of shaving, the consequences of shifting the question might look rather benign. On its face, asking if we can design a razor which requires ten strokes instead of twenty does not seem particularly insidious. However, once we make war and genocide efficient, we deemphasize the question of should. Writing immediately after World War II, Ellul's warning about the dangers of efficiency speaks to the real possibilities of death and destruction which *technique* facilitates.

Postman describes the loving resistance fighter as someone who devalues the idea of efficiency. I do not suggest, nor does Postman for that matter, that the loving resistance fighter's devaluing of efficiency moves us outside the world and realm of *technique*. Ellul's formulation of *technique* suggests its inescapability. However, the loving resistance fighter offers space to push against the idea of efficiency as the permanent end of any endeavor. While the loving resistance fighter cannot counter all instances in which efficiency becomes the dominant goal of human relations, loving resistance affords the individual to act, as Postman (1992, p. 182) put it, "irrespective" of culture's preoccupation with efficiency. Put simply, the loving resistance fighter does not have to take efficiency into account when engaging in any action. More broadly,

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devaluing efficiency offers space for ethical and aesthetic considerations that efficiency pushes to the side.

This precept of the loving resistance fighter reduces the rejection of *technique* and the secular trinity down to a single concept. By taking a stand against the preeminence of efficiency, the loving resistance fighter takes a stand against *technique* and the secular trinity. While Postman might not see embracing petite narratives as the best response to the postmodern condition, his articulation of the loving resistance fighter sees danger in the metanarrative. Efficiency as a commonplace, as a given, cannot stand. As metonymy, the loving resistance fighter rhetorically focuses our attention on the dangers of efficiency.

The Loving Resistance Fighter Does Not Place Blind Faith in Individual Autonomy

Two precepts illustrate loving resistance's rejection of the secular trinity's adherence to individual autonomy. This is the first: those "who do not regard the aged as irrelevant" (Postman, 1992, p. 184). Founder and CEO of *Facebook*, Mark Zuckerberg, once quipped, "Young people are just smarter" (as cited in Samuel, 2017). While some have taken Zuckerberg to task for this statement (Samuel, 2017), Zuckerberg's quote functions as a synecdoche of technopoly's orientation toward the young and, in turn, the elderly. Since the aged are not smart—at least in technopoly's terms—they are easily discounted. The generational gaps promoted by technopoly conjure the antipathy between young and old. They typify a fractured community. Instead of caring for the aged or seeing wisdom in their ideas, a technopoly fosters a belief that the aged are not smart and worth our time and consideration. Technopoly fosters a fractured community between generations; the aged are no longer viewed as valued members of the community.

Fractured community stands as a hallmark of postmodernity but is a residual of modernity and Enlightenment. In *Sources of the Self*, Charles Taylor (1989) notes the rise of

what he called inwardness. Inwardness removes the person from the community; he writes, "[T]he disengaged subject is an independent being, in the sense that his or her paradigm purposes are to be found within, and not dictated by the larger community" (1989, pp. 192-193). Prior to modernity, in the ancient and medieval lifeworlds, a person found meaning in either the polis or the church. The community, represented by the polis and the church, provided each person meaning for individual behavior. However, with the concomitant rise of inwardness and modernity, the belief that each person should find sources for living and meaning from the self began to grow. A disengaged subject finds the sources for living with the self. This disengagement from the community allows for the rise of individualism. Although individualism helped to foster a sense of self that could shunt away the manacles of a tyrannical monarch or church, the individualism promoted by moderate Enlightenment constituted a "misstep" (Arnett & Holba, 2012, p. 195). Individualism formed a misstep because the idea outgrew its original intention and began to reject most notions of community.

In technopoly, wisdom and knowledge do not come from the aged and their experiences. Knowledge comes from experts. Postman (1992) writes, "There is no aspect of human relations that has not been technicalized and therefore relegated to the control of experts" (pp. 87-88). Tradition and social institutions can no longer act as gatekeepers of information. Tradition and social institutions cannot delimit our access to information and, therefore, cannot mold our awareness. Experts, on the other hand, have such a degree of knowledge in one specialized field that they can shape our judgments in one specific domain. In the past, a priest could serve as a guide on all aspects of living. A priest was not just an expert on religion; he was an expert on all things, or his expertise in religion conferred knowledge on a variety of subjects. In a technopoly, we go to an expert, and, unfortunately, experts often lack the historical insight and experience

necessary to go give meaning to the information they disseminate (Postman, 1992, p. 87). The expert has access to one specific area, and because we have so many experts in so many different areas, there is no coherent story or telos guiding all of these areas. The expertise embedded in technopoly becomes fractured community *par excellence*. The expert need not rely on traditions and social institutions common to the entire community. The expert need only rely on the information produced by technical means.

Postman regards the aged as being embedded in the community, and a loving resistance fighter living in a technopoly does not disregard the elderly. Because the loving resistance fighter accommodates the aged, the loving resistance fighter fits within the philosophy of communication. Hannah Arendt's (1958) notion of an "enlarged mentality" stands central to the philosophy of communication, and accommodating the aged and not regarding them as irrelevant fits within an enlarged mentality. Pushing off from ideas described by Immanuel Kant, Arendt articulated the notion of an enlarged mentality as "engaging a world bigger than oneself" (Arnett, 2013, p. 184). In modernity, we have turned away from the idea of enlarged mentality. Taylor's notion of inwardness indicates that people become more and more likely to draw from inner reserves and ideas instead of community standards. Modernity promotes an incessant form of navel-gazing in which the key to unlocking one's own potential lies within the self, perhaps with a lending hand from an expert. An enlarged mentality requires that we turn toward the other and toward the world at large. For the young who grew up in a technopoly, the aged become others. The attitudes and capacities of the aged do not comport with the attitudes and capacities of the young. Moreover, the notion of progress, embedded in technopoly, suggests that society must clear away the old to make way for the new. While we have not reached the point in which society deems it necessary to clear away the elderly, the elderly embody the ideas and memories

of the past, and this becomes especially true if the elderly uphold traditions antithetical to technopoly. Giving attention and care to the aged—recognizing their immanent value—stands against the needs and demands of technopoly. Caring for the aged and regarding them as important becomes tantamount to a recognition of community. It stands a disavowing of the individual and, instead, operates as an enlarged mentality.

This is the second precept that rejects the supremacy of individual autonomy: those "who take seriously the meaning of family loyalty and honor, and who, when they 'reach out and touch someone,' expect that person to be in the same room" (Postman, 1992, p. 184). In 1979, the American Telephone and Telegraph Company (AT&T) began using the slogan "Reach out and touch someone." The slogan, created by the advertising agency N.W. Ayer & Son, became effective for the brand because it "tied an emotional connection to pushing phone buttons" (Winzenburg, 2008, p. 15). AT&T commercials during the 1980s would often feature family members calling one another from long distances, a son away at college calling home to check-in or a grandson calling a grandfather.

Postman found this slogan particularly troublesome because it implied that technology could keep the family unit together. Communication technology mediating the human voice produces a different environment for the familial unit. As a consequence, technological interference has the potential to disrupt notions inherent to the family. When telephone communication between family members becomes standard, traditional ideas undergirding family, loyalty and honor, begin to wane in importance. The value and quality of talk depends upon the semantic environment (Postman, 1976). Family loyalty and honor do not inherently exist within a family. The semantic environment produces loyalty and honor. It creates a communicative space in which loyalty and honor can flourish or flounder. Religion and other

social institutions operated in ways to protect and promote loyalty and honor within the family. Technology inevitably alters those traditions, and Postman found pushing buttons for an emotional connection particularly nettlesome, which is why the loving resistance fighter does not "reach out and touch someone" via the telephone.

This precept, like the others I have identified, also fits within the philosophy of communication. Taking seriously the notions of family loyalty and honor pushes against the ideas of individualism and individual autonomy which are embedded in the secular trinity. Arnett, Fritz, and Holba (2007) write, "The notion of individualism emerges when narrative awareness of traditions that shape consciousness is lost, leaving them forgotten or taken for granted" (p. 118). This element of the loving resistance fighter acknowledges that loyalty and honor become lost within technopoly. Narrative decline signals the shift from the tool-using culture to a technocracy and the shift from a technocracy to a technopoly (Postman, 1992). Narratives center the world of a tool-using culture, and technology in a tool-using culture is a supplementary force. In a technocracy, narratives decline but still have a fighting chance to influence the conduct of society, but in a technopoly the narratives of religion and other social institutions become supplanted by technology. Technology pushes aside the narratives that sustain loyalty and honor. We become stuck in a world in which narratives have collapsed, and instead of narratives guiding individuals, individuals are left to put "together puzzles by making connections and recognizing patterns' (Rushkoff, 2013, p. 34). In the technolopical world, the individual shapes his or her own worldview through pattern recognition and connection-making. By doing this, the individual separates himself or herself from narratives that bind people together. The individual can stand above the world to make sense of it instead of being engaged in the world by living through narrative. A person putting together patterns does not live an

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embedded life. A narrative operates as something larger than an individual. Individuals function to serve the purpose of the narrative.

Taking family loyalty and honor seriously serves as a reminder to the loving resistance fighter that there exists stories and traditions larger than the individual. Although technology may try to intercede familial connections, the loving resistance fighter recognizes that a telephone or, for that matter, any information communication technology fundamentally disrupts the connections we make with family and others. The environment created by the telephone is not the same environment as a face-to-face connection, and making an emotional connection through technology does not operate as a replacement for the narratives that sustain families and human connection. Individual use of technology does not provide the sustenance that the narratives and connections that family provides. The loving resistance fighter recognizes that he or she should remain part of something larger. There are things that are larger than the individual wants and needs which technology facilitates. As a consequence, this precept places the loving resistance fighter firmly within the philosophy of communication. The loving resistance fighter allows one to understand how technopoly gives rise to individualism, and how to push against that idea by returning to the centrality of narrative and tradition.

Reduction to Expansion

Again, Neil Postman cannot say everything there is to say about responding to the culture of technopoly. Instead, he made the deliberate choice to reduce the practices of resistance to technopoly to the act of loving resistance and the acts of the loving resistance fighter. While one can remember a precept of loving resistance—such as reminding oneself of the limits of efficiency, exegesis of the precepts creates for an enlarged perspective of loving resistance. To continue the analogy to the Decalogue, one can know the Ten Commandments, but acting on and

practicing them requires something more. This exegesis and expansion of loving resistance sought to add that something more. The loving resistance fighter, although rhetorically created by Postman as an act, becomes a discourse that helps us to respond to technopoly and the secular trinity of modernity. The loving resistance fighter has the potential to offer narrative ground to respond to the conditions of our contemporary moment. By doing so we can begin to walk loving resistance into a set of meaningful practices.

Conclusion: Who Are Loving Resistance Fighters?

In this chapter, I offered an expansion of the metonym (reduction) that is the loving resistance fighter. Through exegesis one discovers the practices of the loving resistance fighter. Importantly, the expansion of the loving resistance fighter moves the practices beyond the scope of media ecology and into the philosophy of communication. As such, loving resistance becomes a way to confront technopoly without sliding into the traps of modernity and romantic individualism. Although much has been said about confronting technopoly (see Rose, 2017), to use the terminology of general semantics (Korzybski, 1948), the expansion offered in this chapter helps us to think of a loving resistance fighter not as an object but as an event. The loving resistance fighter is not static, and it is not a single individual. The loving resistance fighter embraces the multiplicity and narrative contention present within postmodernity. Beyond this embrace, the loving resistance fighter asks us to leave behind blind faith in the ideals of the moderate Enlightenment and the secular trinity. Loving resistance fighters question the inherent value of the goodness of progress, efficiency, and individual autonomy.

Even though this chapter seeks to move the loving resistance fighter beyond the realm of media ecology, the loving resistance fighter remains indebted to media ecology. Those interested in media ecology and elucidating the tenets of media ecology concern themselves with questions

about the ontology of media ecology (Strate, 2002; Strate, 2006). Watler Ong (1962, 1986) articulated the idea of personalism which we may define as "the philosophy of the human person" (Strate, 2002, p. 2). Because of Ong's influence on media ecology, many aligned with the media ecology tradition find it necessary "to ask *who is media ecology* in order to explain *what is media ecology*" (Strate, 2002, p. 2, emphasis in original). Put simply, according to Strate (2002), we can understand media ecology through the persons of media ecology, and for Strate media ecology operates a scholarly activity of understanding media, community, and environment (2002, p. 4). Therefore, while this chapter discharged itself to explicate the *what* of loving resistance, embracing the personalism of media ecology demands that we ask: who is a loving resistance fighter?

In determining "who is media ecology", media ecologists, as personalists, make these determinations (Strate, 2002, p. 2). The community of scholars through publishing, acceptance of papers, and monographs make the determination of who is and who is not media ecology. Media ecologists write one another into existence. The print medium makes media ecology possible. As was suggested, media ecologists can write themselves into the role of a loving resistance fighter (Grosswiler, 2015), but since techopoly confronts us all, simply writing media ecologists into loving resistance fighters seems rather limiting. In addition, not all who practice media ecology embrace the unity of contraries and/or question the secular trinity. For example, McLuhan, who refused to judge media, could not be considered a loving resistance fighter. His goal was to explain, and he avoided passing judgement on the consequences of individualism and print.

The goal of the following three chapters will be to write the loving resistance fighter into existence. This, again, marks a rhetorical turn on this project. There is an attempt to convince. As a rhetorical turn, my aim is not to simply declare the following people as loving resistance

fighters but to rhetorically demonstrate how Wendell Berry, Robert Caro, and Myles offer ways to live within the boundaries of technopoly. Rhetorical demonstration aligns with Postman's (1988a) claim about the nature of the humanistic research that constitutes media ecology. Humanistic research is a way of storytelling to arrive at the heart of the matter. It requires that we embrace narrative. Put simply, we can understand who and what is loving resistance by attending to narrative; my hope for the following three chapters.

Chapter 4: Wendell Berry's Narrative Ground for Loving Resistance to Progress

In this chapter, and the two that follow, I offer loving resistance fighters who ably respond to the secular trinity of progress, efficiency, and individual autonomy. Their lives and work embrace literacy and writing which can offer a counterbalance to the electronic media and technopoly in which we find ourselves. I recognize the role that literacy and writing play in the creation of techopoly and the rise of individualism and the secular trinity, but this project works to recover elements of literacy and print that help us to come in contact with others to resist. Wendell Berry, Robert Caro, and Myles Horton offer these elements. While print helped to build the values of progress, efficiency, and individual autonomy, technopoly only offers the hope of technological advancement and reification of the secular trinity as a form of salvation. Loving resistance as embodied through the lives of Berry, Caro, and Horton recover the liberatory power of print to respond to technopoly. These individuals do not stand as experts on how to live a life; however, their orientations allow us to think otherwise about communication and the role of literacy in our responses to technopoly.

Introduction

Although we might find ourselves in the midst of postmodernity, the power of modernity and Enlightenment ideals still inform our communicative practices and relationship to technology. Arnett, Fritz, and Holba (2007) contend that the moderate Enlightenment, concomitant with modernity, have given us the "universal truth of progress, efficiency, and individual autonomy" (p. 121). An overreliance on the set of goods of progress, efficiency, and individual autonomy has led to "a new form of tyranny: individualism" (Arnett, Fritz, & Holba, 2007, p. 121). As discussed in previous chapters, the scene of technopoly allows for the impulses of progress, efficiency, and individual autonomy to go unchecked. Not only do we face a tyranny

of technopoly, but we also face a tyranny of individualism, with each system reinforcing one another. Neil Postman's work in *Technopoly* (1992) offers a way for communicators and interlocutors to resist the systems of the secular trinity of progress, efficiency, and individual autonomy as well as technolopical forces. However, we must discover what is loving resistance and who embodies the act of loving resistance, and this chapter seeks to move us in that direction by offering how we might resist the notion of progress.

Writer, farmer, and activist Wendell Berry (born 1934) is a loving resistance fighter who offers ways to operate within technopoly without fully acquiescing to the belief in the goodness of progress. His challenge to the belief in the inherent goodness of progress develops a practical, common sense approach to confronting the world of technopoly. Moreover, Berry forwards writing and poetry as humane and practical ways to remind us of our communities and our sense of being in community.[1] This chapter articulates Wendell Berry as a loving resistance fighter who uses writing and literacy as a way to challenge the inherent goodness of progress. He challenges progress through an articulation of the inherent value of people, the inherent value of living with others, and the importance of ignorance—of knowing one's limitations. Undergirding his challenge to progress is a fundamental belief in the value of writing and print. Berry's commitment to writing, print, and non-electronic media speaks to the *raison d'etre* of Neil

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[1] As I will discuss when discussing his biography, Wendell Berry is primarily known for his poetry and nonfiction work. However, much of my analysis comes from his work as an essayist. His essays directly respond to the industrialization of American farming and offer a clear rejoinder to the notion of progress.

Postman's media ecology and loving resistance. One must step outside of electronic media, even for a brief moment, to achieve balance and clarity in thought.

In order to articulate Wendell Berry's life and writing as an act of loving resistance to technopoly, this chapter will develop in the following manner. First, I will articulate the relationship between progress and technology. Second, I will articulate Wendell Berry's resistance to the belief in the inherent goodness of progress and situate Berry as a loving resistance fighter who offers a common sense approach to technology and progress. Third, I discuss how Berry's work allows us to go nowhere correctly (Arnett, 2010) in an age of technopoly through the rejection of arrogant ignorance and the embrace of an ignorance that allows us to do no harm. Fourth, I discuss how Berry's work encourages us to move away from a digital ecosystem and back to a print ecosystem, a system that allows for the humane development of ideas. In the conclusion, I will draw some implications of Berry's loving resistance to practices in the communication classroom.

Progress and Technology

In Chapter 3, I argued that the loving resistance fighter resists the secular trinity. Specifically, this this resistance calls for a rejection of progress, efficiency, and individual autonomy. In this chapter, I explore how loving resistance can specifically push against the dogmatically assumed goodness of progress. To do this, I will take a moment to detail what constitutes progress and how Postman brings a media ecology orientation to progress.

Faith in Progress

J.B. Bury tracks the origins of our belief of progress in *The Idea of Progress: An Inquiry into Its Growth and Origin* (1960). Bury lays out the parameters of the idea of progress, and he writes, "This idea means that civilisation [sic] has moved, is moving, and will move in a

desirable direction" (1960, p. 2). The goal of society then becomes that "all the inhabitants of the planet would enjoy a perfectly happy existence" (Bury, 1960, p. 2). If this becomes the belief and the goal, our judgment of actions then becomes a matter of whether action moves us in the direction of collective happiness or away from it. Under this idea of progress, we accept as fact that an action can or cannot lead to greater collective happiness, but there is no way to directly measure or observe the movement toward collective happiness (Bury, 1960, p. 2). Even if one believes that things have become worse, this negative judgment can only exist if one accepts that progress operates as a good and a goal for society. The parameters of better or worse depend on the idea of progress. Cultures have committed to this idea.

Our commitment to progress constitutes an act of faith. Bury (1960) writes, "Progress of humanity belongs to the same order of ideas as Providence or personal immortality. It is true or it is false, and like them it cannot be proved either true or false. Belief in it is an act of faith" (p. 4). Certain metrics suggest that life has improved. Life expectancy has increased, and fewer people are food insecure. More people have access to electricity and running water. These metrics, however, do not equate to or provide sufficient evidence for humans rising from a primitive state to a civilized one, and these metrics do not indicate that life will continue to improve. Some will forward these facts to secure beliefs that the world is progressing, will continue to progress, and the trajectory of progression has been beneficial to all living humans. Because of this logical leap, the belief that things are better and will get better becomes tantamount to a faith.

Faith in progress did not arise out of the ether. Progress, a commitment to the idea that humans rose out of a primitive state into a civilized state and will continue to rise, did not reach its current status as faith until modernity; neither the ancient lifeworld nor the medieval lifeworld

conceived of progress as inevitable and good (Bury, 1960, p. 7).[2] Bury (1960) contends that neither the ancient lifeworld/historical moment nor the medieval lifeworld/historical moment had the "intellectual climate" to forward progress as a collective good (p. 7). The Renaissance restored faith in "human reason" and allowed progress to begin to emerge as a collective good (Bury, 1960, p. 30). By the early seventeenth century, the climate gave rise to the collective belief and faith in progress. Confidence in our reasoning capacity begat a belief that the spread of happiness and prosperity could and would appear. If we can conquer the natural world with our capacity to reason, then we can improve the lot for everyone. This faith imbibes the metanarrative of modernity.

Faith in Progress through Technology

Postman's history of the relationship between technology and culture in *Technopoly* offers additional meaning to our understanding of the idea and faith in progress. Technology secures our faith in progress. Bury claimed that progress only emerges within an intellectual climate, but technology and technological improvements, which operate as environmental elements, offer some direct evidence of progress. Technology allowed for greater agriculture yields. Technology and scientific discoveries did cure diseases and end plagues. As technology facilitates these accomplishments, we affirm our faith in progress. As our faith in progress and technology rises, our faith in other traditions decline.

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[2] I acknowledge that those living in the ancient and medieval lifeworld would not use the word *progress* in the same way that we do in our contemporary moment. However, Bury utilizes the word *progress* in connection with the ancient and medieval historical moments. Bury points out that progress is a modern phenomenon.

There is an intersection between Bury's intellectual climate of the early seventeenth century and Postman's culture of technocracy. Progress becomes manifest through technological developments, and Postman describes how technologies gave rise to progress within technocratic cultures:

> Technocracy gave us the idea of progress, and necessarily loosened our bonds with tradition—whether political or spiritual. Technocracy filled the air with the promise of new freedoms and new forms of social organization. Technocracy also speeded up the world. We could get places faster, do things faster, accomplish more in a shorter time. Time, in fact, became an adversary over which technology could triumph. And this meant that there was no time to look back or to contemplate what was being lost. There were empires to build, opportunities to exploit, exciting freedoms to enjoy, especially in America. There, on the wings of technocracy, the United States soared to unprecedented heights as a world power. (1992, p. 45).

Faith in progress arose along with technological developments and technological thinking. Within technology, lay the potential to overcome time. Technology allows one to complete more work in a shorter period of time. Technology offers the promise of saving time. While saving time has a clear link to efficiency, the fact that we can measure the time saved allows us to track progress and to improve. Once we can track and measure improvements in time, we can track and measure all types of human endeavors. The love of improvement entered our system and the change became ecological; the whole system changed.

If land sat untouched by human hands but now that land can be maximized to full economic potential, cultures can track this as progress. If new groups of people are given rights, cultures can mark this as progress. As the above passage by Postman indicates, this was

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especially true in the United States. America's expansion to the western portion of the continent, made possible by technology, marked a triumph of the American project. Because the American Constitution was built on a system of rights, the expansion of rights became a measure of progress. The problem occurs when cultures conflate the two examples I just gave and one views both as unquestionably good. The championing of progress becomes especially nefarious when there are no other value systems to challenge them. Although the Enlightenment gave birth to the belief in the goodness of progress, the Enlightenment also had the cultural resources and narratives to temper the faith in progress (Postman, 1999, p. 34-35). Postman argued the Enlightenment functioned as a technocracy, because traditions other than technology still had cultural purchase (Postman, 1992, p. 46). However, a technopoly diminishes the tempering narratives to such an extent that they become irrelevant and, thus, incapable of offering resistance to a deleterious faith in the idea of progress. Within the ecology of technopoly, traditions cannot resist the faith in progress, because technological utopians can point to improvements in technology as *proof* that we have made progress and will continue to make progress. However, we should recall that progress is a faith, and a faith cannot be proven by some sort of empirical measure.

Postman's Challenge to Progress and "Going Nowhere"

Loving resistance offers an alternative to progress, and by offering an alternative to progress, loving resistance aligns itself with the philosophy of communication under the metaphor of "going nowhere." Postman's loving resistance fighter views the idea of progress with "suspicion" (1992, p. 184). The philosophy of communication embraces the metaphor of "going nowhere correctly" (Arnett, 2010). This metaphor reminds us that our movement need not always be forward. One can remain stationary, properly. Remaining stationary, under the

auspices of progress, would function as a waste of time or a lack of progress. However, "going nowhere correctly" suggests that one can be at a standstill and meet the revelatory.[3] Put another way, "going nowhere correctly" delinks acquiring new information or new understanding from progress. New information or new understanding does not mean betterment of the human condition.

Importantly, Arnett (2010) conceived of the metaphor of "going nowhere correctly" as a response to the world fascinated by what Ellul (1964) called *technique*. Cultures which give undue emphasis to *technique* presume that in any given case one can find the rational and efficient method to achieve an end goal; under this view, everything is a machine that can perform a function to achieve a goal (Ellul, 1964, p. 4). Again, under *technique*, achieving a goal just becomes a matter of finding the right methods, and, consequently, perfection of *technique* becomes the end goal. As stated in Chapter 1, there is an inherent link between Postman's technopoly and Ellul's technique, and Ellul's vision of *technique* informed Postman's approach in Technopoly (Gencarelli, 2006, p 233). Postman's goal, at the time of *Technopoly*'s publication, was to warn of the dangers of the American technopoly, and although Ellul sought to warn us of the dangers of *technique*, his primary goal was to explain the historical development and application of technique. If *technique* means that the ends are predetermined, then the metaphor of "going nowhere correctly" would serve to push against both *technique* and technopoly. There is no endpoint in the metaphor Arnett constructed; going nowhere does not

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[3] Scholarship on the philosophy of communication was not the first to suggest this as a possibility. The idea of meeting the revelatory while at a standstill connects to Josef Pieper's (1952) articulation of leisure.

presume that there is a hero of knowledge that will find a cure for all of our problems, move culture forward, and make progress. The metaphor offers space for a different way to approach the world we find in front of us, but this metaphor opens the following question: how do we go nowhere correctly?

<div align="center">**Wendell Berry's Loving Resistance to Progress**</div>

We can begin to find an answer to this question through an interpretation of the works of writer and activist Wendell Berry. Berry offers the narrative ground of loving resistance which illustrates the metaphor of going nowhere within a culture of progress. His work provides the narrative ground that offers the rhetorical force for loving resistance in an age of technopoly. In this section, I will present Berry's biography, orientation toward technology and embrace of common sense which creates space for loving resistance to progress.

Biography of Wendell Berry

Wendell Berry (born 1934) grew up in northern Kentucky's Henry County the son of a lawyer/farmer and worked on the family farm during his youth (Skinner, 2016). After finishing high school, Berry earned a B.A. (1956) and an M.A. (1957) in English from the University of Kentucky. After completing his degrees, Berry went on to teach at Kentucky's Georgetown College, before earning a fellowship at Stanford. He then went on to teach at New York University's Bronx campus from 1962 until 1964. During this time, he also completed his first novel, *Nathan Coulter* (1960). Despite the potential harm to his literary career, Berry moved back to Henry County Kentucky in 1964, so he could return to an agricultural life that would provide him a stronger connection to the land, about which he wanted to write. Upon his return to Kentucky, he continued his writing career and purchased a farm near his family's homestead. He continued to teach at the University of Kentucky full-time until 1977, but he left that position

in order to focus more time on writing and farming. He has published over fifty works of fiction, nonfiction, poetry, and collections of essays. In 2010, he earned the National Humanities Medal awarded by the National Endowment for the Humanities. In 2011, his family started the Berry Center in Henry County, a nonprofit devoted to promoting nonindustrial and sustainable farming. Berry continues to write, farm, publish, and speak.

Connection to the land and ecology inform Berry's prose (both fiction and nonfiction) and his poetry. For example, the novel *Jayber Crow* (2000) compares the lives of two Kentucky men living during the middle of the twentieth century, a barber relying on simple tools and an industrial farmer whose agricultural practices eventually destroy other local farms (Skinner, 2016). Berry's most significant work of nonfiction, *The Unsettling of America: Culture and Agriculture* (1977/2015), argues for farmers and agricultural workers to reconnect, both physically and spiritually to the land; this work also played a significant role in the American environmental movement (Skinner, 2016). Berry's poetry, which has been compared to the works of Robert Frost, evokes not only a connection to the land, but it also muses on the nature of relationship between people living in community and living in the community of God (Skinner, 2016).

Moreover, Berry's writing does not stand distant and detached from his lived experience. Berry also works as an activist. In addition to supporting sustainable farming through the Berry Center, Berry has been an outspoken supporter of environmental causes. In particular, he has participated in political protests working to curb mountaintop mining (also known as strip, surface, or open pit mining), and he has been a staunch critic of those excavation industries and those who support industries that perpetuate environmental degradation (Skinner, 2016). Berry's

writing and activism reciprocally reinforce one another and creates a direct connection between his writing and his activism. .

Berry's Distance from Technology

As articulated in Chapter 2, distance from technology becomes a prerequisite for loving resistance. Neil Postman's *Technopoly* presents to readers the inherent dangers of technology and the technological thinking that led to the development of technopoly. Without distance from technology, one becomes enamored by technology's supposed benefits and does not have the capacity to see technology for what it is. Loving resistance as a philosophy of communication that adds meaning to our communicative practices requires distance from technology. As such, for Wendell Berry to provide the narrative ground for loving resistance to the goodness of progress, I must demonstrate how Berry distanced himself from technology. This distance from technology enables distance from technopoly and leverages his work into the realm of loving resistance.

Wendell Berry's poetry inveighs technology and its capacity to lead to human overconfidence and environmental destruction. Berry opens *What Are People For?* (1990) with a poem he wrote in 1975 called "Damage". "Damage" begins with Berry hiring a bulldozer operator to build a pond on his farm. This decision proved to be disastrous as the manmade pond led to the collapse of a wooded area sitting above the pond. Because of this, Berry concludes, "The trouble was the familiar one: too much power, too little knowledge. The fault was mine" (1990, p. 5). The tools available to him did more than he expected, but Berry is no determinist. He recognizes that the mistake was his mistake—the tool facilitated and exacerbated the mistake because of his inadequacy to understand what he could do.

In the last line of "Damage," Berry writes, "But a man with a machine and inadequate culture—such as I was when I made my pond—is a pestilence. He shakes more than he can hold" (1990, p. 8). This line speaks to the fundamental problem with technopoly. Culture provides resources which can hold the machines and tools at bay. They can offer perspective and resources. In a technopoly, as Postman (1992) claims, the tools and technology become culture (p. 20). Since technopoly can only offer technology and technical thinking as a solution to problems, it follows that technopoly stands as an inadequate culture to keep the man with a machine in its proper place. Put simply, although Berry does not use the term technopoly, he recognizes the dangers that tools, power, and technology hold. Moreover, Berry also recognizes the importance of other resources to help keep technology in its proper place and under control, namely, culture.

However, culture cannot stop the machine. The art within culture can only do so much, and art does not exist without limits. Art—which, for Berry, means writing poetry—cannot take him away from the land. It cannot undo the damage he brought to the land. Berry lives in his land. His land is his place, and he calls his place his "subject" (Berry, 1990, p. 7). A poem has limits. As he writes in "Damage", "If I live in my subject, then writing about it cannot 'free' me of it or 'get it out of my system.' When I am finished writing, I can only return to what I have been writing about" (Berry, 1990, p. 7). Writing will not fix the land; at best, "An art that heals and protects its subject is a geography of scars" (Berry, 1990, p. 7). Improperly guided and, without a culture to help, humans can only bring damage to the land when they have the power to alter the environment. Art serves to protect the land by reminding us of the damage done. Art can remind us of the scars that we created in our land and in our subject. At best, art reminds us of our limits and our damage.

Again, in a technopoly, technologies, both visible and invisible, become the culture. They replace traditional resources such as religion and art. Consequently, an acquiescence to technopoly, an acceptance of the power of technology in all areas of human conduct, circumvents the hope that exists in writing and in art to provide us with a geography of scars. The bulldozer does not have a memory of the damage it brought, but Wendell Berry does. Art and writing should serve as a reminder of this damage. Without the ability to take into account this damage, humans, as Berry notes, will become and continue to be a pestilence.

"Damage" reveals to us the capacity for Wendell Berry to be a loving resistance fighter. As stated in Chapter 3, a loving resistance fighter is a unity of contraries. Loving resistance recognizes that technology is needed and necessary, but does not see all technology as the highest form of human achievement. In "Damage", Berry learns that a bulldozer can build a pond; it can help to better his land, his subject. However, with that building comes scarring, and the scarring necessitates the art. While art can be a respite from the problems associated with technological building, it is not a solution. There is no solution—only a capacity to offer the "geography of scars." Instead, he sees limitations; "It used to be that I could think of art as a refuge from such troubles. From the imperfections of life, one could take refuge in the perfections of art. One could read a good poem-or better, write one" (Berry, 1990, p. 6). However, Berry is "no longer able to think that way" (Berry, 1990, p. 6). Berry fundamentally accepts the limitations of what is possible.

Postman articulated technopoly as a world without limits, an "Improbable World" (1992, p. 56). If Berry held that art was a cure-all and as having a limitless capacity to heal, then he would not have the capacity for loving resistance. Instead, he sees art as doing something else to

the dangers brought to the land by technology. Man will "shake more than he can hold" without art, but art does not prevent the shaking.

Moreover, Berry's next poem in *What Are People For?*, "Healing" describes what occurs when one gives too much weight to innovation and the new. Berry (1990) writes, "Works of pride, by self-called creators, with their premiums on originality, reduce the Creation to novelty—the faint surprises of minds incapable of wonder" (p. 9). This also speaks to the ability of technology to amuse and amaze ourselves, and media ecology takes great strides to explicate the dangers of both (Postman, 1985; Strate, 2014). Berry recognizes the problem of the faith in the new or in the original, and, therefore, puts himself into the role of a loving resistance fighter, even though he does not call himself one.

In an essay found in *What Are People For?* (1990), Berry illustrates his distanced stance from technology. "Why I am Not Going to Buy a Computer" (1990) articulates the need for distance from technology and how technology can intervene in deleterious ways. *New England Review and Bread Loaf Quarterly* originally published this essay in 1987 and *Harper's* reprinted it, and after the publication, *Harper's* published letters from readers who critiqued Berry's argument and gave Berry space to respond to the letters (Yagelski, 2001, p. 103). The version of this essay published in *What Are People For?* includes the original essay, readers' letters to Berry, and Berry's response to the readers. In Berry's original essay, he articulates the connection between a computer and systems of environmental degradation and how a computer nettles in his writing process. Readers defend computer use by treating the computer as a tool, and by doing so, they make arguments for an instrumental view of technology. Berry responds by challenging that view. This essay illustrates how the rhetorical turn becomes inevitable as

monologues compete against one another, but Berry's monologue emerges as a monologue of loving resistance.

Berry recognizes that using a computer requires connection to other systems. In acknowledging the connection of computer use to other systems, Berry, although not a media ecologist, imbibes the ecological and systems thinking inherent to media ecology. Computer use requires electricity, and electricity requires coal production, which is deleterious to the land. He writes, "I would hate to think that my work as a writer could not be done without a direct dependence on strip-mined coal. How could I write conscientiously against the rape of nature if I were, in the act of writing, implicated in the rape?" (Berry, 1990, p. 170). He does acknowledge that he is already part of the energy systems which allow for computer use and writes, "Like almost everybody else, I am hooked to the energy corporations, which I do not admire" (Berry, 1990, p. 170). However, through this acknowledgement, he demonstrates how he thinks about technology beyond its immediate implications, beyond its instrumental value. Purchasing and using a computer does not operate as a singular act; it has implications beyond a single purchase and a single use.

Technology use, for Berry, does not stand as inevitable and does not seem natural, and in this way, he creates distance from technology. Put simply, just because technology is present and available does not mean that the present and available technology should be used. Computer technology has a connection to electricity production and coal, and, therefore, Berry need not automatically adopt it. He positions electricity production as inherently unnatural and antithetical to nature and considers the methods used to create electricity as a form of rape. This is why he chooses to "work with a pencil or a pen and a piece of paper" (Berry, 1990, p. 170). Computer

use intervenes in his writing in such a way that it becomes desecrated by the technology. Writing becomes complicit in degradation.

Importantly, the distance he creates from the computer allows him to view the technology with clarity. Despite being told that he "could greatly improve things by buying a computer" (Berry, 1990, p. 170), he asserts that a computer does not necessarily improve writing and writes, "I disbelieve, and therefore strongly resent, the assertion that I or anybody could write better or more easily with a computer than with a pencil" (Berry, 1990, p. 171). Others present the computer in a way that suggests its availability will offer marked improvement in writing. This line of thinking and argumentation remain a constant of technological innovation; the mere presence of the innovation makes things better. However, Berry points out that many authors produced great works without the use of a computer, so it stands to reason that a computer does not make work better in a specific and tangible way (1990, p. 171). In another essay in *What Are People For?*, "Feminism, the Body, and the Machine", Berry (1990) contends that most point to the fact that computers offer editing tools which contain the promise of ease of correction and better writing; however, he writes, "To me, also, there is a significant difference between ready correction and easy correction" (p. 193). We often mistake the latter for the former. Ease of correction operates as a guise. Longhand, pens, pencils, and paper make corrections difficult, and through difficulty, writing improves and ideas become lucid (Berry, 1990, p. 193). The accuracy of this final belief is irrelevant. What is important is that Berry clearly sees what the technology does and does not allow himself to become blinded by the ingenuity of the editing technology offered by computers.

Moreover, introducing new technologies into the environment undermines older technologies, and this undermining of older technologies also proves deleterious. Berry (1990)

writes, "It is well understood that technological innovation always requires the discarding of the 'old model'" (p. 171). Berry composes all of his work in longhand, and his wife edits and corrects his work in collaboration. Berry's wife, Tanya Berry, would then type up the manuscript on a Royal standard typewriter. Berry contemplates that a computer will not only replace the typewriter, but it will also replace Tanya's role in the writing and editing process. Many of the readers lambasted Berry for relying on his partner for editing because, in their minds, it constituted free labor and an exploitative relationship. However, Tanya Berry, herself, bristles at the notion that she is merely a typist in the relationship (Jensen, 2017). Berry also views the work between himself and Tanya as collaborative and representative of a long forgotten belief that marriage operates "as a state of mutual help" (Berry, 1990, p. 180). Introducing a computer into the Berrys' marital environment will inevitably disrupt that environment. A state of mutual independence can replace a state of mutual help, and the new system of independence (rather than interdependence) becomes "a sort of private political system in which rights and interests must be constantly asserted and defended" (Berry, 1990, p. 1990). Berry's critics in "Why I am Not Going to Buy a Computer" contend that a computer would free Tanya to pursue her own interests, ignoring the possibility that Tanya's interests and Wendell interests might align to form the "Berrys' interests."

Berry's readers and critics in the essay—and he alludes to other critics in "Feminism, the Body, and the Machine"—want to view technology as a fix and a disruptor to oppressive marital practices. For them, technology improves the human condition by allowing each person to work independently of one another. Technology operates as a solution to a problem. However, this view of technology not only undermines an alternate conception of marriage, a relationship of mutual help, but this view also retrenches patriarchal notions regarding technology. The stance

of Berry's critics represents the tech-fix stance, a stance predicated on "the belief that technology can be used to solve all types of problems, even social ones" (Bush, 2009, p. 113). Again, this faith in technology to solve problems—including problems of inequality—operates as a guise since "tech-fix has not worked well for most women or people of color" (Bush, 2009, p. 113). Proselytizers of technology have long-contended that technology will make work more egalitarian and less reliant on physical labor which will allow more women to access the labor market, but accessing jobs has not allowed women to leave poverty or gain material wealth (Bush, 2009, p. 113). Technology does not bring forth the supposed benefits, and, at the same time distracts us by conflating technological innovation with notions of progress and expansion of human dignity. Berry's rejection of the computer allows him to defend his alternative conception of marriage and precludes him from becoming swept up by the promises of technology.

Berry's Embrace of Common Sense

By creating distance from technology, Berry allows common sense to prevail. Another respondent to Berry's essay "Why I am Not Going to Buy a Computer" touts the benefits of a computer and writes, "[M]y personal computer gives me access to up-to-the-minute reports on the workings of the EPA and the nuclear industry" (quoted in Berry, 1990, p. 174). This reader views a computer as a powerful tool which can provide information that an individual without a computer would not be able to access. As Postman (2006), notes technology always promises more information, but our problems do not arise because of an information deficit. The access to information, again, operates as technology's guise, and Berry can see right through that guise when he responds. He writes, "Why do I need a centralized computer system to alert me to environmental crises? That I live every hour of every day in an environmental crisis I know from

all my senses" (Berry, 1990, p. 177). Access to information distances us from environmental crises by framing environmental crises through reports, but this distancing denies the fact that we experience crises all the time. We can see it on the streets and on the back porch. A computer system suggests that we only experience crises when there is a report, but Berry recognizes that we do not need this system of computers and reports to see the crises.

Berry's common sense on issues of the environment, once again, illustrates how Berry's writing brings resistance to technology and technopoly into the realm of the philosophy of communication. Arnett and Holba (2012) discuss the relationship between common sense and the philosophy of communication, and write, "Common sense is a practiced communicative action and decision making, performed in multiple facets of our existence [...] These practices require action, mistake, success, and communal reaction, which textures the meaningfulness of given practices" (p. 211). Berry's decision to not use a computer might seem as though he embraces Luddite tendencies, but his refusal of the computer arises out of experience and action with others. His experience with the bulldozer which I mentioned earlier in the chapter points to how mistakes and the learned experiences from those mistakes help to build a sense of action. Moreover, environmental crises do not function as events taking place in distances from far away. His community experiences those crises. Mountaintop removal and strip mining exist in his community, and he can trust the intuition of the community to alert him to the harm created by those practices. Technology does not make the environmental damage more real or harmful. His interactions with the community alert him to those harms.

Berry's Resistance to (Technological) Progress

This distance allows Berry to offer a critique of a progress wrapped up in technological development. Technological progress, as Berry writes in "Feminism, the Body, and the

Machine", has led to "a social and ecological decline" (1990, p. 187). Technological development and progress disrupted traditional forms of work which resulted in the decline of quality of goods (Berry, 1990, p. 187). Industrial agriculture, brought forth by technological innovations, led to the decline of land and soil (Berry, 1990, p. 187). Television undermined traditional notions of education and became a "tool for stupefaction and disintegration", and "Industrial education has abandoned the old duty of passing on the cultural and intellectual inheritance in favor of baby-sitting and career preparation" (Berry, 1990, p. 187). In this sense, distance allowed Berry to view technology not as an apparatus of infinite beneficence. Instead, he sees the treachery within technology when progress presents the new as necessarily better.

As noted in previous chapters, Postman explained why technology formed into a system of technopoly. Americans have been quick to accept the values of technopoly because it has helped to make life longer, cleaner, and more convenient. Like Postman, Berry also recognizes the rhetorical pull of technology, and he writes, "It has provided as well a glamor of newness, ease, and affluence that made it seductive even to those who suffered most from it" (Berry, 1990, p. 186). Technology offers many promises, and in many ways, technology has been able to deliver on those promises. Technology and technological thinking has been able to extend the length of a human life, and because of this fact, we become willing to accept technology's interventions into our politics, religion, and education.

As noted by Postman, a technopoly creates its own system of justification. The technical solution becomes the correct, proper, and/or accurate solution to problems because what is correct, proper, and accurate is measurable. Berry also recognizes how technology justifies itself through quantitative measurement; he writes, "I know that 'technological progress' can be defended, but I observe that the defenses are invariably quantitative" (Berry, 1990, p. 186). Also

like Postman, Berry identifies how these statistics (undergirded by technical thinking) elided other important questions. A long life does not necessarily mean a good life. For much of human history, a long life was nice, but it was not necessarily better than a good life. A good life cannot be measured with the same precision as a long life, so a long life becomes the preferred goal. Berry (1990) writes, "The statisticians of longevity ignore good in both its senses; they do not ask if the prolonged life is virtuous, or if it is satisfactory" (p. 187). Although he does not use the same terms as Postman, Berry moves into the realm of loving resistance by distancing himself from technology in order to see technology and technological progress without the obfuscation created by technopoly, technology, and technological thinking.

In addition, like Postman, Berry distinguishes humanistic inquiry from technological progress. Technological progress prevents us from engaging in a study or an understanding of the human condition; "After several generations of 'technological progress,' in fact, we have become people who *cannot* think about anything important" (Berry, 1990, p. 187, emphasis in original). For some, Berry's assessment might come off as hyperbolic, but his hyperbole breaks up the notion that things are going along smoothly. He forces us to think in a different manner. Unlike technopoly which destroys any sense of the history of ideas by always seemingly pushing forward, Berry suggests that writing and other good works must have a clear sense of history, and he claims, "All good human work remembers its history" (1990, p. 193). He uses a palimpsest as a metaphor. A palimpsest is a kind of manuscript which contains traces of previously changed or erased writing. What existed previously remains visible. History gives a sense of what came previously. If history imbibes good works, our works should resemble a palimpsest, and we should see the history of ideas behind our creations. Since technology often offers a solution to a problem that does not exist, then there remains no traces of the ideas that

preceded the technology; the new technological innovation always has the appearance of the new.

Berry also imposes limits on his critique of technological progress. He does not make himself out as a Luddite willing to smash technological innovation. Instead, he operates under the unity of contraries as well. Resistance has limits, and Berry recognizes this. Resistance, which Berry suggests as a process of drawing a line, comes from recognizing when we might actually need a technology, and once we recognize when we actually need a technology, drawing a line becomes easy. He writes, "It is plain to me that the line ought to be drawn without fail wherever it can be drawn easily. And it ought to be easy [...] to refuse to buy what one does not need" (Berry, 1990, p. 196). Our relationship to technology has become so natural that we cannot see technology with clear eyes. With a recognition of history and common sense, we can learn to draw the line on technology. We can reject the supposed naturalness of technological innovation. Rejecting the naturalness of technology means that we will accept some but are willing to reject others. We need not accept technology wholesale. This might seem like a contradiction to some, but it operates as a unity of contraries.

Going Nowhere through Ignorance

Distance from technology, an embrace of common sense, and resistance to progress all help to illustrate how Berry function as a loving resistance fighter to technopoly. These are acts which fit within Postman's loving resistance fighter. However, Berry's loving resistance to technopoly, if we are to think of it as philosophy of communication which adds meaning to everyday practices, must offer a rejoinder to technopoly and allow us to go nowhere correctly. Berry offers this rejoinder through an embrace of ignorance.

Berry's collection of essays in *The Way of Ignorance and Other Essays* (2005) offers a stance against the inherent goodness of progress while emphasizing the importance of "going nowhere correctly" as a trajectory which resists technological culture. Berry offers ignorance as a central metaphor and narrative ground which allows for a building of a life which can reasonably respond to American technopoly. Berry takes the phrase "the way of ignorance" from T.S. Eliot's (1943) poem, "East Coker": "In order to arrive at what you do not know/You must go by a way which is the way of ignorance." Berry (2005) writes, "The way of ignorance, therefore, is to be careful, to know the limits and the efficacy of our knowledge. It is to be humble and to work on an appropriate scale" (p. ix-x). The faith in progress suggests that there is no end out of reach. If we accumulate enough knowledge, all problems become solvable. Ignorance, on the other hand, as Berry conceives it reminds us that we live in a world with limits, and when we recognize those limits, we can start to live appropriately. Progress suggests that we can go anywhere; ignorance suggests that we cannot. Once we accept that we cannot, we can then begin to understand how to live sustainably and appropriately.

However, Berry does not seek to praise ignorance. Instead, we must acknowledge ignorance. Acknowledging the inevitability of ignorance means that we recognize "that some problems are unsolvable and some questions unanswerable" (Berry, 2005, p. ix). Unsolvable problems and unanswerable questions are part of the human experience. Faith in science, on the other hand, presumes that "we humans will have in hand 'the secret of life' or 'the secret of the universe,' and then all our problems will be solved and all our troubles and sorrows ended" (Berry, 2005, p. ix). Ignorance serves as a reminder of limits. It serves as a reminder that we can "go nowhere." Moreover, it suggests that we can "go nowhere correctly" if we carry with us a recognition of ignorance. Ignorance, through a linking to going nowhere, rejects the totalizing

force of modernity. Modernity presumes that we can arrive at answers through investigation and belief in scientific rationality. Rejecting certainty and embracing ignorance allows for the multiplicity that is inherent to the postmodern condition, while eschewing the arrogant ignorance of technopoly and modernity.

The Danger of Arrogant Ignorance

Acknowledging ignorance, that we do not know something, helps us to avoid the problem of what Berry calls arrogant ignorance. "Arrogant ignorance" Berry (2005) claims, "promotes a global economy while ignoring the global exchange of pests and diseases that must inevitably accompany it. Arrogant ignorance makes war without a thought of peace" (p. 53-54). Arrogant ignorance underplays risk. Choices have consequences and risks. Arrogant ignorance suggests that we must take on an action, even if we cannot work out or foresee the consequences (Berry, 2005, p. 54). Berry associates arrogant ignorance with corporate thinking; companies and organizations invest time and money, and that investment demands action, even if we cannot foresee what will happen. Arrogant ignorance throws its hands in the air and says, "Well, you cannot know everything" and acts despite this fact.

The way of ignorance does not suggest that one must be omniscient in order to act. Instead, one should admit ignorance and work to resolve that ignorance. Arrogant ignorance acts without regard to unintended and ecological consequences and has such faith in what he or she is doing that the unknown unknowns become easily dismissed. Berry draws figurative analogies to this type of action and writes, "[I]gnorant arrogance resembles much too closely an automobile being driven by a six-year-old or a loaded pistol in the hands of a monkey" (2005, p. 53). Neither the child nor the monkey in these scenarios knows the power that they hold. Acting with arrogant ignorance becomes a practice in childlike or animal like behavior.

Arrogant ignorance also becomes problematic through calculation and the idea of an acceptable loss. Calculation and technical thinking creates the ability to predict, and they allow us to have some sense of the foreseeable. That calculable risk, however, does not stand as an elimination of risk. Arrogant ignorance suggests that we can know the risks, accept the risks, and still operate while causing harm because we have faith that the good will outweigh the bad. This leads to farcical conclusions: "And once the risk of harm is appraised as 'acceptable,' the result is often absurdity: We destroy a village to save it; we destroy freedom in order to save it; we destroy the world in order to live in it" (Berry, 2005, p. 65). This type of arrogant ignorance does not live in the ether. Arrogant ignorance allowed the My Lai Massacre and bombing of Dresden; it allowed the suspension of constitutional rights in times of war; it allowed the destruction of the environment for the good of the economy. The consequences of arrogant ignorance become dire.

Arrogant ignorance affirms itself on the goodness of progress. In his charting of the history of the idea of progress, Bury (1960) identifies Francis Bacon as central to the codification of progress (p. 50). For Bacon, utility, or the belief in producing the greatest happiness while reducing suffering, should operate as the end goal of scientific investigation (Bury, 1960, p. 52). Unlike the philosophers and thinkers of antiquity who engaged in scientific investigation for "speculative satisfaction", Bacon believed that investigation could and should "establish the reign of man over nature" (Bury, 1960, p. 52). Bacon's utilitarian attitude toward knowledge led "to the creation of a new mental atmosphere in which the theory of Progress was afterward to develop" (Bury, 1960, p. 52). For Bacon, the accumulation and application of knowledge allows for humans to lead lives that are less harsh; the young, through the application of science, will have better lives than the old (Bury, 1960, p. 54). Because nature is harsh, unrelenting, and, perhaps, the greatest source of human suffering (during Bacon's lifetime), science should no

longer work to satisfy itself—i.e. work to develop a complete description of the natural world. Instead, science should always operate as applied. Science should give humans the domain to shunt nature and no longer be subject to it; science should allow humans to rule nature.

Arrogant ignorance operates on this type of science as a means to achieve progress, a ruling over nature. If science did just devote itself to its own end and create a complete description of the natural world, ignorance would disappear because humankind would have complete knowledge of the universe and all its functions. I do not suggest that this is possible or even plausible; however, under the type of science only devoted to science, science would only have concern with itself. It would not impose its order on the natural world. Science, in its incompleteness, would recognize its own ignorance and stay within its bounds. Bacon saw that science could become applied. Once science becomes applied, it changes the natural world and can improve the general wellbeing of humans. Applied science forgets its incompleteness and pushes forward on the notion of progress—that we can make things better than they used to be. This typifies arrogant ignorance. Applied science—guided by calculation—acts without knowing under the misguided belief that science will inevitably make things better.

Science without application can become self-correcting without causing harm. Science under the controlled conditions within a laboratory, seeking its own end, cannot cause the damage of arrogant ignorance. However, applied science brings about dangers, and Berry (2005) makes this distinction, "Scientists in laboratories did not cause the ozone hole or the hypoxic zones or acid rain or Chernobyl or Bhopal or Love Canal. It is when knowledge is corporatized, commercialized, and applied that it goes out of control" (p. 61). Splitting the atom helps contribute to a satisfaction of scientific curiosity, but once this becomes applied, the science of splitting an atom leads to nuclear destruction. This operates as Berry's distinction. Arrogant

ignorance suggests we can harness nuclear power toward a positive end. The thinking goes: the positives outweigh the negatives, so we should proceed. Proceeding despite the potential harms becomes justified once one commits to the notion of progress. Without the idea of progress and the idea that we should apply our scientific discoveries to make for a better world, there stands no reason for arrogant ignorance. At the very least, without the idea of progress, we become able to check arrogant ignorance.

Remember, the traditions in tool-using cultures and technocracy had the weight to keep the idea of progress at bay. Checking arrogant ignorance occurred under a tool-using culture or technocracy, but without the resources provided by politics or religion, arrogant ignorance can remain unchecked. Religion can serve as a check on greed and avarice, but once religion becomes expunged and conjured irrelevant by a technopoly, greed and avarice overtake scientific endeavors. This leads to toxic results; Berry claims, "Ignorance plus arrogance plus greed sponsors 'better living with chemistry,' and produces the ozone hole and the dead zone in the Gulf of Mexico" (2005, p. 53). No force exists to say no to the supposed "better living with chemistry", since technopoly renders nontechnical thinking irrelevant.

Do No Harm and Go Nowhere Correctly

Rather than relying on the principle of utility that imbibes the idea of progress, Berry's way of ignorance implores the adoption of another principle grounded in ancient thinking but still has purchase today, the code of Hippocrates. Berry writes, "But the best advice may have been given by Hippocrates: 'As to diseases make a habit of two things—to help, or at the least, to do no harm'" (2005, p. 65). While the need to help might override our better impulses, the responsibility to do no harm places limits on our application of knowledge. Helping "requires only knowledge; one needs to know promising remedies and how to apply them" (Berry, 2005,

p. 65). The danger of what Berry calls the "corporate mind"—which is willing to act on arrogant ignorance—rests in the potential to simply apply knowledge without thinking of the latter part of the oath. As Rushkoff (2019) notes, many digital technology companies still employ this mindset by seeking to extract as much value and as many dollars as possible without thinking about the consequences of their actions (p. 104). Hippocrates's code of conduct in the ancient world was relevant to the applied science of the time. As I mentioned earlier, the Greek system of science devoted itself to satisfying the ends of science, a completeness of scientific knowledge. This does not mean that applied science did not exist in antiquity. However, the Hippocratic code mollified the excesses of applied science. Once established as the first order of application of scientific principles, medical science has limits. While the progenitors of "better living with chemistry" probably seek to provide help, Berry suggests that they forget the principle of do no harm because technical thinking coupled with greed forgets that one should, first, not cause harm.

Here, again, Berry reminds us of the importance of limits. Doing no harm means that one should eschew the notion of a calculable and acceptable harm. This eschewing requires one to reject the corporatist thinking that infiltrates us. The followers of the corporatist mind championing progress argue "with a complicit compliment to themselves, that you cannot succeed without risking failure" (Berry, 2005, p. 65). This thinking ignores the consequences of failure. Berry does not suggest a nihilist thought process that throws away the notion of effort, nor does he make a plea to never try. When helping others, one should risk personal effort, but an acquiescence to progress and the corporate mind forgets that efforts that fail also contain risks. The corporatist mind eschewing the notion of harm boils down to the adage that "you need to break a few eggs to make an omelet." This thinking lends itself well to the process of making breakfast, but not every decision is like breakfast. Because of greed and progress, anything that

stands in the way becomes an egg which can become breakable. Traditions and institutions that place limits on human conduct become destroyable. People that hinder a desire for progress also become destroyable.

In preventing harm and risk, one must remember the notion of scale. Berry (2005) writes, "Risk, like everything else, has an appropriate scale. By propriety of scale we limit the possible damages of the risks we take. If we cannot control scale so as to limit the effects, then we should not take the risk" (p. 66). This requires consideration of the point of view of others, of those who are not us. Would an energy company be willing to remove the top of the mountain to reach a coal seam, if they truly considered the people living around the mountain? The loss of a home becomes acceptable to the energy company when discounting the position of the communities harmed by the mine. Discounting the views of the community represents arrogant ignorance. It presumes that the company knows what is best for the community around the mountain, and the company also presumes that it can control and contain any damages. This avarice ignores the outlook of all community members. It ignores the risk to the community members. If it does recognize the risk, this thinking allows the "benefits to outweigh the costs": you have to crack a few eggs…

Not only does "do no harm" inform a resistance to the inherent goodness of progress, "do not harm" should also inform responses to technopoly. As discussed in Chapter 2, the scene of technopoly demands a response; it demands an act. However, actions responding to technopoly should also proceed with caution and recognize limitations. Berry indicated that the Hippocratic Oath also asks people to help. Helping does not mean that people should embrace heroism or narratives of heroic acts. Instead, help should come with limits. One's desire to be heroic should not supersede the act of helping, and one must recognize when help can cause harm beyond our

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capacity to control harm. Help, instead, requires "at a minimum, compassion and humility and caution" (Berry, 2005, p. 65). Arrogant ignorance does not act with compassion, humility, and caution. Compassion, humility, and caution stand as impulses that control arrogant ignorance. Again, the loving resistance fighter, if they embrace the way of ignorance while opposing technopoly, does not seek to destroy. The loving resistance fighter is not willing to crack a few eggs or risk failure without regard to harm. Helping within limits does not mean that we should not help, but helping with limits also recognizes that our help might cause more harm than we intended. Again, this type of help might stop the process of help, and we might go nowhere. However, if we go nowhere and cause no harm, then we have done this correctly. We go nowhere correctly.

Even going nowhere requires change. The loving resistance fighter does not conflate change and progress. Certainly, change functions as the engine of progress. Progress necessitates that things change, but the loving resistance fighter remembers that change is multidirectional. Progress suggests that the only type of change worthwhile is the type of change that moves forward. By forward, there is some measure or metric that allows us to see an improvement from one generation to the next. Going nowhere correctly remembers that change can move backward, or we can enact change in such a way that allows us to stand still. The tide of technopoly suggest that we must continue to adopt technology and technical thinking to improve. Going nowhere correctly means that we can change by resisting the tide and stand still

In our current environment of technopoly, change becomes rapid and constant. Throughout his career, Postman sought to cope with the consequences of change. In *Teaching as a Subversive Activity* (1969) Postman and co-author Charles Weingartner argued that students find themselves in an environment of constant change, and, consequently, education should

strive to be forward looking enough to help students cope with those changes. Postman altered

his position ten years later in *Teaching as a Conserving Activity* (1979). In that text, Postman put

forward the metaphor that education should operate as a "thermostatic activity." Education

should provide balance. In a culture which moves slowly, an education should have a forward

look to keep the culture from becoming stagnant and running the risk of dying. In a culture that

moves rapidly, education works best by moving slowly and upholding traditions of learning. The

thermostatic view of education regards balance as the most important quality that it can bestow

on learners. *Technopoly* (1992) serves as a warning about the rapid changes brought about by the

pervasiveness of technical thinking. Resisting technopoly, in the form of the loving resistance

fighter, requires a "suspicion of progress" (Postman, 1992, p. 184). However, because of the

strong association of change with progress, one might misunderstand Postman's plea for loving

resistance. Opposing technopoly does not equate to opposing change. Quite the opposite is true.

Opposing technopoly requires change but in a different direction or in no direction at all.

Berry also advocates on behalf of change. Just as Postman offered the loving resistance

fighter as a response to technopoly, Berry offers a response to the arrogant ignorance brought

about by the technical thinking of a corporate mind. Like Postman, Berry does not offer a large

scale solution. Instead he offers a personal one: "We can change ourselves" (Berry, 2005, p. 63).

Rather than going by a way of overconfidence and arrogance, we can change ourselves to

"confront our ignorance" (Berry, 2005, p. 63). Reminding ourselves that we are not static and

complete offers hope when confronting the inevitable (Berry, 2005, p. 63). Changing ourselves

does not suggest that we elevate our individual autonomy; we are not super-beings able to

control the world around us without regard for others. On the contrary, we must remind

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ourselves of experience and traditions that ground our actions and thoughts, and because those are inherently limited, we realize that we cannot know all and conquer all.

Also like Postman, the call for change offered by Berry does not equate to a revolutionary societal change. A call for revolution becomes a call for more arrogance because a revolution presumes that one can create change without causing harm. The arrogance of revolution "cannot be cured by greater arrogance, or ignorance by greater ignorance" (Berry, 2005, p, 63). The personal change Berry advocates becomes a "change of heart, rebirth, metanoia, enlightenment" that are inherent to religion and tradition (Berry, 2005, p. 63). Like a religious conversion that demands an admission of sin, Berry's change "begins with a recognition of ignorance" (2005, p. 64). One must admit, "I don't know, and I may never know." If you can admit that you never know and that should not cause harm, then you have changed, but unlike progress, you are not moving forward. You, again, go nowhere.

Admitting going nowhere also admits that we might stand past the point of redemption. Arrogant ignorance suggests that we can solve all problems and that we have enough information to act to solve all problems or can access the necessary situation. The way of ignorance Berry suggests that we also drop an arrogant optimism grounded in arrogant ignorance. Changing our orientation toward progress commences "with the recognition of ignorance and of need, of being in a bad situation" (Berry, 2005, p. 64). Without acknowledging the bad situation, the push for progress and improvement continues. This is not to say that arrogant ignorance does not recognize a bad situation, but arrogant ignorance rests upon naive optimism. The way of ignorance suggested by Berry must delimit optimism. Optimism without limits becomes dangerous. Berry (2005) writes, "Our situation is extremely bad, as I have said, and optimism cannot improve it or make it look better" (p. 64). The bad situation to which Berry speaks is our

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current environmental and cultural demise. Environmentally, global climate change has pushed the earth, and the humans living on it, toward the abyss, and it would be foolish to suggest that we can immediately stem the tide. Technopoly subsumed our institutions and culture, and we are in a bad situation.

However, acknowledging that we might be past the point of redemption and admitting the bad situation does not amount to despair; this acknowledgment is honest. Only through honesty can we turn away from arrogant ignorance and the ambitions that accompany that ignorance. Honesty allows us to place limits on science, progress, and science done in the name of progress. Rejecting optimism and admitting the dire nature of the situation allows us to think about context. We work within a bad moment, and when we know that we are working within a bad moment, then "we can turn back from our ambitions to consult both the local ecosystem and the cultural instructions conveyed to us by religion and the arts" (Berry, 2005, p. 65). Importantly, consultation does not mean finding solutions to the problems. Consulting the local and the traditions of religion and art does not suggest that we improve upon those ecosystems and institutions. Instead, we admit our ignorance and attempt to learn from those ecosystems and institutions of the past. Berry's narrative ground asks us to consider: what are the available cultural instruction to help us in our current moment?

Berry's Ecological Thinking

Berry's thinking about ecosystems is not incidental to this project. Although Berry explicitly writes about damage to ecosystems in the environment wrought by industrial pollution, his writing recognized an ecological worldview. Berry promotes the notion "that nothing lives in isolation" (Wirzba, 2002, p. xiv). Human health does not live independently of environmental health; it is all connected. In this sense, Berry's work constitutes an ecological worldview. Berry

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(2002) writes, "Body, soul (or mind or spirit), community, and world are all susceptible to each other's influence, and they are all conductors of each other's influence" (p. 105). While the way of ignorance Berry identified speaks to the notion of going nowhere, doing no harm, and recognizing a bad situation, it also recognizes that those individual choices impact the larger community and environment. These paths of thinking and acting do not live in isolation either.

Berry embraces a worldview akin to media ecology. Although they do not operate in exactly the same manner, the affiliation between Berry's work and media ecology is significant. Much of media ecology embraces the network and systems thinking inherent to cybernetics (Nystrom, 1973; Strate, 2017b; Postman, 1979). Berry, too, employs the network metaphor to explain our bodily connection to the environment and the connection of bodily health to environmental health. Berry (2002) claims, "If a farmer fails to understand what health is, his farm becomes unhealthy; it produces unhealthy food, which damages the health of the community" (p. 105). Individual failures do not live in isolation. They connect to other elements in the environment. Put simply, arrogant ignorance does not live in isolation. Instead, choices exist in a network; Berry (2002) states, "But this is a network, a spherical network, by which each part is connected to every other part" (p. 105). However, Berry does not suggest that it all begins with individual choice; the community influences the individual and both mutually reinforce one another (Berry, 2002, p. 105). Errors in the community and errors made by the individual continue within the network and create catastrophic change (Berry, 2002, p. 106). Berry does not identify himself as a philosopher or a scholar (Berry, 2005), but his writing fits within the guideposts of media ecology.

Media ecology stresses connection and the idea that the introduction of a technology or a new choice. In *Technopoly* (1992), Postman employs the metaphor of ecology and network to

guide his thinking about technology, and he writes, "I mean 'ecological' in the same sense as the word is used by environmental scientists. One significant change generates total change" (p. 18). Postman does not utilize a community metaphor in the same manner that Berry does. Postman's corpus of scholarship focused on the changes wrought by technology and their impact on the entire American project. Postman did not write about community on a scale as small as Berry identifies. However, Postman and Berry were both, nonetheless, oriented by the idea of ecology. Changes and choices that we might generally think of as small actually have ramifications and consequences beyond what we can see or immediately anticipate.

Moreover, loving resistance stands as a "reasonable response" to technopoly, not a wholesale solution to the problems inherent to technopoly (Postman, 1992, p. 182). As a minimalist response, loving resistance approaches technopoly with a degree of humility; it does not propose to solve the problem and recognizes the limitations of the response. It does not stand as a big idea. Berry's way of ignorance recognizes that we become bound by the limits of knowledge, and Berry's work promotes the idea of "Think Little" (2005, p. 86). Berry contends that thinking in our contemporary American period is marked by the notion of thinking big, thinking on a grand scale, and thinking about a world without limits. Instead, Think Little "implies the necessary change of thinking and feeling, and suggests the necessary work" (Berry, 2005, p. 86). Effectuating positive change does require one to think on a larger scale, but this does not mean that one should ignore the hard work of individual change. Berry gives a compelling example of how Think Little becomes a necessary first step to positive change: "If you are concerned about the proliferation of trash, then by all means start an organization in your community to do something about it. But before-*and while*-you organize, pick up some bottles yourself" (Berry, 2005, p. 87, emphasis in original). Too much of American culture focuses on

the big idea of the former, while ignoring the little idea of the latter. Essentially, pointing out the problem does not suffice; we have to do the work. This is not a grand solution which absolves us of personal responsibility. We play a role in destruction, and, therefore, we must play a role in limiting our destruction, regardless of what happens to the world around us.

This moves Berry's work into the philosophy of communication. It offers a discourse to give meaning and shape to our practices and habits. It offers an approach to the world around us, but it does not succumb to the metanarrative of modernity. Modernity encourages thinking on a grand scale. The way of ignorance and thinking/acting on a small scale promotes a petite narrative. Modernity, technopoly, and American culture will move without concern for those who oppose technopoly, but we can respond in a reasonable way through loving resistance. These might be the "habits of the heart" (Arnett & Holba, 2012) which allow us to think beyond the rules and paradigms of technopoly.

While Berry promotes Think Little as a response to environmental destruction, loving resistance promotes the perspective of Think Little as a response to the destruction brought by technopoly. Despite this, loving resistance and its potential to push against modernity's faith in the goodness of progress can learn from Berry's philosophy of communication. Berry's philosophy of communication brings additive change to the loving resistance fighter. Learning from Berry, loving resistance gains from Berry's plea for ignorance and thinking on a small scale. As mentioned in Chapter 1, Postman viewed himself as an educationist, as someone able to deploy an educational philosophy to reduce stupidity (Postman, 1988b). Again, stupidity operates as a form of behavior, and can include our misuses of language and technology. Postman, unlike Berry, sought to deploy his educational philosophy on a much grander scale. One need only look at Postman's writings on education to come to this conclusion. Postman

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consistently calls for reforms to education. Reforms for education are not small scale changes; they are large. Postman (1979) even calls schools a mass medium and recognizes that we are all subject to school systems. In this way, Postman becomes guilty of the big thinking inherent to America and even technopoly. As such, his writings on education become susceptible to arrogant ignorance, despite his protestations against the social sciences which promote arrogant ignorance.

Berry pleads for us to return to local ecosystems and the traditions of art and religion. Berry pleas for a way of ignorance that recognizes our irremediable situation. He pleads for us to do no harm. He argues that we, in the vernacular of the philosophy of communication, go nowhere, but correctly. These are small scale actions taken on by the individual communication agent, but these small scale changes do not slide into the triumphalism of individualism. Instead, Berry's reminders allow the loving resistance fighter to turn back to the resources to which we already have access. Put another way, Berry's philosophy of communication asks us to think about Postman remedies on a small scale. On a smaller scale we can return to the practices and traditions which provide meaning beyond a triumph over technopoly. Berry's philosophy of communication provokes Postman's loving resistance fighter to look backward.

A Return to Print

As Gencarelli (2006) argued, conservation of the print medium became the telos of Postman's media ecology. Add to this perspective Berry's stance against progress, the loving resistance fighter can reasonably respond to progress embedded in technopoly by looking to the traditions of the print medium. Because of technology's infiltration of educational systems, print cannot return to its former glory and status in the educational system. Anton (2011) pointed out the problems of aliteracy and reading atrophy. There is not a wide scale solution to the problem's

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identified by Anton, especially when schools turn toward laptop programs and emphasize the importance of internet activity as part of the educational system. However, on a small scale, we can find resources from the print medium that can help us to navigate the problems posed by technopoly, and we need not look beyond Postman's media ecology to find these resources. Specifically, we should look to the metaphor of "Typographic America" that Postman articulated in *Amusing Ourselves to Death* (1985).

Perhaps, the most well-known idea, among media ecologists, of *Amusing Ourselves to Death* was Postman's development of the aphorism, "The Medium is the Metaphor." While the loving resistance fighter certainly acknowledges that the medium is the metaphor, more significant to our development of the resistance to progress is the idea that media can function as epistemologies. Media tells us what we know and how we know what we know. *Amusing Ourselves to Death* warned us against the dangers of the epistemology of television. At the same time, when Postman describes "Typographic America" he acknowledges the resources we can retrieve to respond to the epistemologies of not only television but also technopoly.

Again, the loving resistance fighter in the middle of technopoly must hold dear the narratives of the American project. This does not mean an unreflective acceptance of the conditions wrought by the American project. After all, the American project did usher forth technopoly. Loving resistance requires a reflective understanding of the traditions of the American project. This understanding of tradition offers productive bearing on thought by elucidating the "real origins of traditional concepts in order to distill from them anew their original spirit which has so sadly evaporated from the very key words of political language" (Arendt, 1961, p. 15). This way of thinking avoids the reductionism of "America was founded by great people and is therefore great. The end." Instead, embracing tradition requires an

investigation of the origins of our traditions and discovering how we can place those traditions into our current political and social practices. Thinking about tradition in this way requires us to consider the historical moment in which the traditions developed not as a way to recreate the historical moment, but as a way to locate the resources of that historical moment. This demands that those seeking to recover the American project as a way to respond to technopoly should consider the epistemology of those traditions.

Typographic America, the America that gave rise to our revolutionary impulses which sought to shed the yoke of traditional sources of power (radical Enlightenment), grew out of the epistemology of print. Pushing off of the work of Marshall McLuhan (1962) and Walter Ong (1982/2002), Postman (1985) argues that America became a byproduct of literacy and print. The epistemology of print favors rationality and deliberation, and rationality and deliberation allow for democratic governance. Typography did not produce a total gain; "Typography fostered the modern idea of individuality, but it destroyed the medieval sense of community and integration. Typography created prose but made poetry into an exotic and elitist form of expression" (Postman, 1985, p. 29). On the whole, however, Postman argues the advantages of print outweigh the costs. My point here is not to agree with Postman's assessment of print but to point to print as a media *and* epistemology which gave rise to the democratic deliberation associated with the radical Enlightenment. Therefore, print becomes a resource for recovering some of the ideals of radical Enlightenment.

Moreover, Postman *specifically* identifies Typographic America as an environment which allowed for the growth of rationality, thought, deliberation, and consideration. Typographic America functions as a metaphor unto itself that allows for hope in the face of a grim situation

brought about by avarice and the pursuit of progress. It provides resources from the American project which bring new meaning to our grim situation.

Typographic America embraces the spirit and the medium of pre-revolutionary America that allowed for the development of a Typographic Mind. Postman (1985) describes the culture fomented by the print medium, "[I]t is a paramount fact that they and their heirs were dedicated and skillful readers whose religious sensibilities, political ideas and social life were embedded in the medium of typography" (p. 31). Print allowed for a way of thinking which informed the religion, politics, and sociality of pre-revolutionary America. Postman goes on to describe the depth and the breadth of literacy in America at this time. While religious texts were central to the lifeworld and the reading life of Typographic America, the influence of typography, as an epistemology, spread to other domains of life (Postman, 1985, p. 33). Reading touched all subject matters in the colonies, and literacy did not stand as a purely aristocratic endeavor as it was not regarded "as an elitist activity" (Postman, 1985, p 34). This is not to suggest that aristocracy and elitism did not exist in America, and this does not also suggest that everyone in colonial America knew how to read. However, reading became a habit embraced by the collective living within America at that time. Postman's description of this time period certainly contains some strains of romanticism, but this romanticism does not preclude Typographic America from becoming a resource worth recovering.

This fascination with reading in early America had consequences which informed other media as well. The printed word informed American oratory. The lecture hall became an important community center in America, and the printed word became the medium by which Americans judged oratory. Even though literacy did not become universal, encountering the mind informed by print did reach universality. To listen to a sermon, a public lecture, or a

political speech, was tantamount to hearing someone read aloud. The audience heard the printed word. As Marshall McLuhan noted, "[T]he 'content' of any medium is always another medium. The content of writing is speech, just as the written word is the content of print, and print is the content of the telegraph" (2003, p. 19). In a print world, the content of speech was the printed word. Even without full literacy, Typographic America was a literate culture, and this literate culture produces a literate mind.

My point is not to attempt to recreate the literacy of colonial America, but to keep colonial America close to the heart. It remains an American resource and can become part of a reasonable response to technopoly. I must admit, if technopoly began in America, then Typographic America became partially responsible for the development of the American Technopoly. Again, this is where we find the Faustian Bargain of the printed word; "[T]echnology giveth and technology taketh away" (Postman, 1990, para. 5). Despite this, Typographic America can still exist as a narrative which moves us to reasonably respond to the scene of technopoly. It becomes a resource which provides narrative grounding for our acts of loving resistance which push against technopoly.

Narrative figures important in our discussion of resistance. Arnett (2011) claims, "Narrative is the ground upon which a human being finds moral direction" (p. 48). We can think of resistance as a marshaling of efforts. If I were to walk from a beach and into the ocean, I would feel the push of the waves and water directing me back toward the beach. It takes effort for me to meet the waves, resist them, and continue walking into the ocean. I have to be motivated to keep walking. In the same way, *Technopoly*, by awakening me to the dangers of a technolopical culture, instills a motivation for loving resistance, but initiating resistance is not the same as sustaining resistance. Moreover, Postman does little beyond outlining the acts of the

loving resistance fighter. By providing moral direction, narrative sustains our efforts of resistance. It provides a motivating force beyond the initial spark, and we can continually return to narrative when our inspiration to resist depletes.

Typographic America, then, relies on a narrative ethic. Typographic America does not function as a story. A narrative ethic moves beyond the notion of story. Arnett (2011) explains the difference between narrative and story, "What differentiates a narrative from being just a story-laden context is that a group of people actually believe in the narrative" (p. 48). People will not sacrifice their own lives for a story, but they will "fight and die for narrative ground that holds the key to their identity" (Arnett, 2011, p, 48). The point is that Typographic America offers a narrative which offers meaning for resistance. It makes America salvageable, not because of what America is or because of what America was, but because America offers the hope of a rational and human form of governance. It offers a space in which debate and deliberation occur. Although colonial America contained the evil of chattel slavery, it also held the rational resources to end the practice of slavery.

Of additional importance to this narrative is that Typographic America allowed the Typographic Mind to grow and develop. The Typographic Mind, which Postman also articulated in *Amusing Ourselves to Death*, could see joy and pleasure in argument and rationality instead of boredom. The mind under the auspices of the television medium becomes easily enchanted and distracted. The Typographic Mind viewed intricate and detailed argument as a "pleasurable and common form of discourse" instead of dry and alien (Postman, 1985, p. 47). As television promotes the perspective that intricate argument operates as dry and alien, print, thus, becomes a counter-environment that allows for the Typographic Mind.

Postman explains the connection between Typographic America and the Typographic mind. Typographic America predicated itself on the written word, and like any other medium, the written word has consequences on the culture at large. Postman (1985) writes, "[T]he written word, and an oratory based upon it, *has a content*: a semantic, paraphrasable, propositional content" (p. 49, emphasis in original). Print controls the nature of language in both written and oral communication, and the exercise of control allows for facts and claims to emerge. The written word allows for verification and truth (Patterson & Wilkins, 2011, p, 24). Unlike the medium of orality, which is inherently ephemeral, the written word allows for scrutiny. One can verify the actual words written and the meaning of those words. Ideas, facts, and claims become the subject of scrutiny. Moreover, the written word must point to and/or create some kind of symbolic action and if the written word does not do this, it becomes "nonsense" (Postman, 1985, p. 50). Precision and accuracy in language becomes the byproduct of the written word because of the way in which we can scrutinize the written word. Consequently, effective and meaningful language becomes "content-laden and serious" (Postman, 1985, p. 50). As printed material increased in the United States, a culture of seriousness and scrutiny developed around the material.

The system of print promotes a system of thought rooted in print. That patterns inherent to print allowed for concomitant patterns of thinking. A medium which focuses on content and seriousness demands some seriousness from the people encountering the medium. This does not mean that all writing is verifiable, serious, and truthful. However, to be able to distinguish truth from fiction, those reading printed material "must come armed, in a serious state of intellectual readiness" (Postman, 1985, p. 50). Consequently, a relationship between reader and writer develops. The writer must meet the expectations of the reader's scrutiny, and the reader must

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give time and attention to the ideas expressed in the written world. As printed material spread, more and more relationships between reader and writer developed, but what also develops is a culture in which writers error when they "make mistakes, when they lie, contradict themselves, fail to support their generalizations, try to enforce illogical connections. In a print culture, readers make mistakes when they don't notice, or even worse, don't care" (Postman, 1985, p. 51). Strong writers encourage strong readers and strong readers encourage strong writers and on and on. The print medium becomes a system in which the reader and writer hold one another accountable. This system produces a Typographic Mind, a mind which can be held accountable for what one writes and what one reads.

As mentioned previously in this project, technopoly metastasized to influence traditions and institutions of politics, religion, and education. Technopoly's infiltration of these institutions was not the first time a medium and culture came in and disrupted tradition. In Typographic America, print operated as the dominant force in these traditions. Print shaped public discourse, and because politics, religion, and education are public institutions, print also shaped their manners of conduct. Postman points to the debates between Abraham Lincoln and Stephen Douglas as politics via print *par excellence*. On the campaign trail for a United States Senate seat to represent the state of Illinois, Lincoln and Douglas debated one another. The debates would last for hours, and audiences would travel great distances to watch the debates. In addition, publications would print speeches within the debate, so the voting public within Illinois would read the debate. For Postman, this was the politics of print. As for religion, according to Postman (1985), "In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, religious thought and institutions in America were dominated by an austere, learned, and intellectual form of discourse that is largely absent today" (p. 55-6). Moreover, the religious leaders and groups of Typographic America created the

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first colleges and universities in the United States. Print became the basis for all education (Postman, 1979). Because of the rationality embedded in those traditions, they possessed the power and cultural weight to keep technopoly at bay.

Typographic America and the Typographic Mind, taken together, offer a narrative in which the institutions of politics, religion, and education have potency based on rationality. Traditions in the print medium conjures a renewed hope in these institutions. This does not, again, suggest that culture and the United States can "go back." "Going back" is based on a romanticized vision of the past. However, the potency of print becomes a resource for those wishing to oppose technolopical culture; print is a resource for the loving resistance fighter. We need not march forward to get to print, and we do not *progress* to print. Print culture is a bygone of the past, but print culture offers a resource for those living in the present.

We do not resist progress because progress and change makes us angry. Instead, we resist progress because it might harm us, and we can see that it harms us when we see the loss of value in traditions. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, technocracy and the pursuit of progress, undermined both political and religious traditions. Traditions stand in stark contrast to the notion of progress. Progress suggests that we must move forward. Culture must move forward because—the thinking goes—what happened in the past, while possibly interesting, amounted to nothing more than a primitive state of our human endeavor. Hope remains in the future which is under the auspices of progress. If the past was bad and the future is good, then there remains little need or use for traditions as traditions point to things from the past. Under the logic of progress, to make progress requires a jettisoning of traditions, as they represent nothing more than our primitive past.

However, the loving resistance fighter, at the very least, is "suspicious of the idea of progress" (Postman, 1992, p. 184). He or she can look at progress with skepticism and question whether progress leads to a net positive for the collective. Because progress has become so linked to technology and technological progress, distance from technology invites skepticism of progress. With Wendell Berry's narrative grounding, we can recall the damage brought on by technology and our foolish belief that we have control over it. Through the distance from technology we can learn to go nowhere correctly. We can do nothing, and by doing nothing we find ourselves doing something valuable. The way of ignorance provides the rhetorical force of going nowhere. Ignorance reminds us that we do not and cannot know everything. Once we admit this, we recognize our present situation for what it is, a very bad situation, and instead of looking forward, we can look backward, not as a way to recreate the past, but as a way to let the past inform the present. We can go back to the political traditions that provide the help we so badly need. It provides a way for us to recall Typographic America and the Typographic Mind. We can see that the past need not be thrown into the waste bin of history. Instead, the past, centered on humane and rational discourse promoted by a print culture will offer a narrative ground toward our communication and interaction with others and technology.

Conclusion: Loving Resistance to Progress as Pedagogy

This chapter retrieved Wendell Berry's work to form narrative ground for loving resistance to technopoly and technopoly's adherence to belief in the inherent goodness of progress. Barry's embrace of a common sense approach to drawing lines around technology's encroachment on communication and human interaction serves as a reminder that through ignorance we can go nowhere correctly and strive to do no harm. Berry's ecological thinking provokes us to remember the media environments that preceded our current technopoly, and we

can embrace the medium of print as a resource to help recover a sense of rational and humane interaction. Berry's narrative grounding for loving resistance does not function as a cure-all to the problems posed by technopoly and the limitations of loving resistance, but his grounding does offer us a way to go nowhere correctly.

It would be a fool's errand to suggest that a single person can offer complete control over a single environment. No single person can stand above the world and control what happens in it. However, higher education's commitment to the liberal ideals allowed for the notion of academic freedom (Marsden, 1994). Academic freedom does give university faculty some degree of autonomy in the classroom. This autonomy creates space for loving resistance to the notion of progress in the communication classroom.

First, communication educators can take Berry's advice and draw a line as to what communication technologies are necessary for learning. While university policy might set requirements for the use of certain learning management systems, not all technologies are necessary within the classroom. A loving resistance fighter should not be awed by the "technological ingenuity" of a particular device or platform (Postman, 1992, p. 184). Communication educators who embrace loving resistance work to overcome the awe of technology and examine the ecological consequences of a given technology on the learning process. As Berry noted, there were many great works of literature that existed before the advent of the computer. In the same way, a great number of people learned without the computer or other communication technologies. At the same time, communication administrators may also want to dislodge technology adoption from faculty evaluation. Adding communication technology to the classroom does not stand as a form of progress, and communication educators and administrators would be wise to remember this.

Second, within the communication discipline, teaching the use of communication technology becomes inevitable. Berry's precepts of ignorance and doing no harm reminds communication educators of the ecological consequences to adopting communication technologies, and even if we have to learn and adopt the communication technologies, there are consequences to adoption. Moreover, adoption of communication technology does not always prove to be liberatory. In this way, communication educators must also encourage students to embrace Postman's (2006) claim that we must ask whether the communication technology makes us better or worse. Even if we cannot completely eschew a technology, we have to remind ourselves that we might be made worse by the technology. Communication educators have to recognize and, in turn, encourage their students to recognize that we cannot know all the consequences of our adoption. As a result we must work to do no harm when adopting and using technology.

Third, a modernist approach to communication and rhetorical studies emphasizes the notion of effective communication: through study and investigation, we can become better communicators. Progress imbibes this orientation. The effectiveness orientation suggests that communication students can progress from poor communicators to effective communicators, if the students select and adopt the appropriate communication techniques. Introductory public speaking textbooks suggest that improved public speaking can be liberatory (see Zarefsky, 2014; Beebe & Beebe, 2018). While there have been many thorough critiques of this modernist orientation (see Hall, 1989; Harding, 1991; Deetz, 1992; Stewart, 2011), the effectiveness orientation still permeates the communication classroom. This is not to suggest that individual classes and instructors do not eschew and critique notions of effective communication, but the assessment movement in higher education demands measurement of student learning so

academic programs can take action to improve (Walvoord, 2010, p. 4). Even if an individual instructor were inclined to eschew the effectiveness orientation, the system of higher education has embraced the notion of assessment, and effectiveness and progress inevitably makes its way into the classroom. Consequently, communication educators must embrace the critiques of the effectiveness orientation, but also remember that these critiques might not go anywhere. Resistance need not be successful, but communication educators must provide what Postman (1979) calls the purpose of education, the counterargument. If communication education focuses on progress, then loving resistance in the classroom would focus on something else. Perhaps, the better approach would be to embrace Berry's notion of doing no harm.

Fourth, and related to the previous point, communication educators would be well served to embrace alternative conceptions of assessment. Specifically, Arneson and Arnett's (1998) conception of narrative assessment would function as a rejoinder to the progress orientation of most assessment perspectives. Narrative assessment "utilizes an assessment model where we ask students to understand material as a story (who are the characters, who came before whom, who said what) and suggest how communication scholarship could be used in today's drama" (Arneson & Arnett, 1998, p. 53). Understanding does not stand as a precondition for progress. With Berry's work in mind, we can understand and make a decision not to act so as not to cause harm. Narrative assessment allows communication educators to work within the system of higher education, while not necessarily committing to the idea of progress. As Postman identified, loving resistance calls for embracing narratives, and narrative assessment can operate as a form of resistance in the communication classroom.

Fifth, narrative assessment and loving resistance allows for a commitment to the print medium in the communication classroom. Within narrative assessment, students are called upon

to create narratives, but narratives must have a medium. Arneson and Arnett (1998) claim that students must create and defend their narratives utilizing oral communication and written communication (p. 53). As noted earlier, the print medium works well for the communication and defense of ideas. This means that assessment of communication need not focus on the skills of communication per se. Instead, this form of assessment focuses on how students understand communication in a historical context (Arneson & Arnett, 1998), and a student cannot develop and defend an idea without the written word and print. This form of assessment requires communication educators to embrace the ecosystem of print. This form of assessment has us returning to traditions of the past rather than focusing on improvement for the future.

Finally, in embracing the traditions of the past, communication educators would be well served by following the advice of Cory Anton in the first two chapters of *Communication Uncovered* (2011). Anton makes a plea for reading and study. Chapter one is called "The Practice of Reading Good Books: A Plea to Teachers and Students" and Anton argues that reading difficult texts helps to de-link the belief that access to information operates as a sign of intelligence. Access to information as a sign of intelligence is a maker of "psychological (individualistic) understandings of minds, persons, and texts" (Anton, 2011, p. 12). Reading, unlike access to information, "generates incontrovertible proof, solid unmistakable evidence, of how malleable we are. Thus, resources for empirically demonstrating the shortcomings of psychological individualism are to be found within the practice of reading good books" (Anton, 2011, p. 12). Chapter 2, "Study as a Way of Life: Learning about Education Metaphors", Anton (2011) argues, "The larger task ahead is to recover and re-enliven the sense that living itself is an art and that serious study is one of the richest resources for continued self-growth and development in that art" (p. 23). To build this commitment, professors must demonstrate that

they are "genuinely excited to be in class" and "stay tough all the way through" (Anton, 2011, pp. 20-21). In both of these chapters, Anton acknowledges that reading and study becomes a lost art for students and professors alike. Difficult texts and encouraging students to read difficult texts are part of the print tradition. Professors become unlikely to assign difficult reading, and students become less willing to tackle difficult texts. However, if communication educators make a commitment to return to the ecosystem of print, then students and professors can focus on the ideas, rather than improvement. Focusing on ideas creates the potential to foster study habits because students are not focusing on building a specific communication skill. Combine this with narrative assessment, and students can learn how to integrate ideas into communication.

Wendell Berry's narrative grounding for loving resistance provides communication educators the resources to resist technopoly and the commitment to progress inherent to modernity. As Postman (1992) stated, "No one person is an expert on how to live a life" (p. 182). Certainly, extending Postman's loving resistance fighter through the work of Berry does not create a perfect model for communication education, nor does it provide a communication ethic free from faults and confusions. Instead, it provides resources for thinking differently about the notion of progress, technological innovation, and communication technologies. In the next chapter, I will discuss how loving resistance can help us to content with our collective preoccupation with efficiency.

Chapter 5: Robert Caro's Narrative Ground for Loving Resistance to Efficiency

Introduction

In *Team Human* (2019), Douglas Rushkoff argues that our digital media environment has fundamentally undermined human connection and social cohesion. Citing scientists working within the field of evolutionary biology, Rushkoff claims that the fundamental nature of human existence, rooted in biology, is to pursue social cohesion and cooperation (2019, p.11). Language and communication promote social cohesion and cooperation (Rushkoff, 2019, p. 18). The field of general semantics suggests that because humans can share information across time and place, we are fundamentally different from other living organisms; we are time binders who can share our experiences across time to create collective knowledge to improve the human condition (see Korzybski 1948; Hayakawa, 1972; Johnson, 2018). The field of rhetoric also acknowledges the ways in which language and communication can bring a greater sense of affiliation (see Burke, 1984). However, the digital media environment erodes this sense of affiliation. This is not to say that conflict did not occur before the appearance of our digital media environment, but the consequences of our new environment—an environment that could only appear in a technopoly—erode the sense of cohesion in new, nefarious ways. We have to remember that media is not always social, and, in particular digital media, through algorithms, engage us individually (Rushkoff, 2019, p. 38). Moreover, there exists a particular irony in that social media does not promote sociality, and Rushkoff contends that they promote the opposite of sociality. Algorithms will engage person A in a different manner than person B because each person will have different internet browsing experiences, so the algorithm eliminates the notion of a common experience. This can occur even if two people visit the same website or use the

same app. Common experiences that might have created social cohesion now become individual experiences.

Moreover, Rushkoff (2019) develops the metaphor of "mechanomorphism" which he describes as treating humans as machines or technology[4] (p. 80). Borrowing from two McLuhan probes (reversal of medium and figure-ground), Rushkoff (2019) contends that machines and technology have become the role models for behavior, and we pattern our relations after machines (p. 79). Instead of allowing technological apparati to operate in assistance of humans to leverage our potential, a strange shift occurred: we pattern ourselves and our communication after the machine. This produces a quantified notion of the self (Rushkoff, 2019, p. 93). In the digital environment, we exist as something measurable, stripped of all qualitative conditions. Like a machine that can be measured in terms of efficiency, efficiency becomes the measure of a human being. As an example, we measure the quality of an online store in terms of the ease and quickness of delivery. When the digital environment sets these expectations for the culture, we expect those living within the culture to match those expectations. In this sense, a student might measure teacher satisfaction according to the ease and quickness of delivery. Other values such as patience or rigor might fall to the wayside. I do not suggest that all human relations are like this, but the digital media environment that results from the environment of technopoly pushes us

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[4] Rushkoff was not the first to use this metaphor. Owen Barfield (1988) develop the metaphor in *Saving the Appearances: A Study in Idolatry*. Rushkoff's articulation of mechanomorphism does not reference Barfield and seems to refer to a different constellation of phenomena. Barfield (1957/1988) calls mechanomorphism a "collective recollection" (p. 52).

away from collective experience and toward individualism. It pushes us toward the prominence of efficiency.

For those startled by these developments, Neil Postman's loving resistance fighter offers a rejoinder to the digital media environment. I do not suggest that an individual can fully escape this environment, but I do suggest that loving resistance carries the resources that allow us to respond to this digital media environment. Recall that a loving resistance fighter is a person "who refuses to accept efficiency as the pre-eminent goal of human relations" (Postman, 1992, p. 184). Loving resistance provides the rhetorical resources to motivate us to act against the environment in which we find ourselves, an environment in which cohesion is stripped and replaced by individual experiences and efficiency. We cannot overcome this environment, but loving resistance reminds us that we need not defer to efficiency in our relations. This begs the question: given the power of the digital media environment and technopoly, how can we begin to respond? As mentioned previously, Postman does not offer his readers much guidance in this manner. This chapter offers a corrective to Postman's paucity in describing loving resistance.

In this chapter, I offer another loving resistance fighter who pushes against the excesses of modernity, journalist and biographer Robert A. Caro (born 1935). In particular, Caro's orientation toward work, writing, and print provides the narrative grounding for resistance to the metanarrative of modernity and its excesses by reclaiming the value of and faith in narratives told in the print medium. As outlined by Arnett, Fritz, and Holba (2007) and Arnett (2012), the values of progress, efficiency, and individual autonomy represent modernity gone awry. An overvaluation of these ideals created a "'bad faith'" that prompted us to believe in our ability to move and shape the world around us (Arnett, Fritz, & Holba, 2007, p. 115). While the narrative grounding elucidated in the works and life of Robert A. Caro does not offer a panacea to our bad

faith, it does offer a path of resistance to modernity that exemplifies Neil Postman's idea of loving resistance.

In order to develop this argument, this chapter will proceed in the following manner. First, I will discuss the idea of efficiency and why it is a concept worth resisting. Second, taking into consideration the tenets of loving resistance, I will work to establish Robert A. Caro as a loving resistance fighter. Third, I will discuss Caro's specific refusal of efficiency and commitment to professionalism as a guiding light that turns us away from the excesses of modernity. Fourth, I will discuss how Caro's writing and commitment to print helps us to return to a sense of place in an electronic environment that eroded our sense of place (Meyrowitz, 1985). Finally, I will conclude by discussing how Caro's story informs how we can conduct the scholarly work of media ecology to bring about environmental awareness within the walls of academia and beyond.

Efficiency

In this section, I connect the notion of efficiency, as part of the secular trinity, to Neil Postman's articulation of technopoly. Like progress, the goodness of efficiency did not rise out of the ether. Instead, the belief in the goodness of efficiency has a history. Continuing the work of the philosophy of communication that tries to situate meaning historically (Arnett & Holba, 2012; Taylor, 1989), I seek to situate the rise of the goodness of efficiency historically. I cannot offer a complete history of efficiency, but I will tie efficiency to Jacques Ellul's (1964) notion of *technique*.

Earlier in this project, I discussed the difference between the radical Enlightenment and moderate Enlightenment. Radical Enlightenment sought to disrupt the tyranny of the monarchy and the church, and moderate Enlightenment functioned as an Enlightenment gone awry by

bringing forth the rise of the problems of modernity (Arnett, Fritz, & Holba, 2007, p. 116). Arnett, Fritz, and Holba (2007) write, "Moderate Enlightenment thinkers defined freedom in terms of one's capacity to control life by increasing pleasure and reducing pain" (p. 116). The moderate Enlightenment aligns with the metanarrative of modernity as described by Lyotard (1984) in which a knowledge hero works to a positive end through the maximization of pleasure and the minimization of pain (p. xxiv). Modernity presumes that the accumulation of scientific knowledge—through whatever means of investigation rationally agreed upon—shall allow humans to rise above the conditions of life (Lyotard, 1984, p. xxiii). With enough knowledge, presumes the thinking of modernity that grew out of the moderate Enlightenment, we can overcome all of the problems we face.

This tendency in thinking, the belief we can overcome all obstacles, promotes a maximalist perspective on the freedom of the individual that undermines traditions of the community. Put simply, the community becomes an obstacle for scientific progress and the accumulation of knowledge. As a result of this maximalist perspective, a different set of values began to arise. Instead of a set of values guided by the community, tradition, and/or religious narratives, the moderate Enlightenment needed a set of values—a communication ethic—that allowed for the freedom of the individual to control environmental and community conditions. The tendencies of the moderate Enlightenment promoted the "goodness of progress, efficiency, and individual autonomy" to release "human potential" to overcome the bounds of the environmental and human conditions (Arnett, Fritz, & Holba, 2007, p. 121). Unleashing human potential to overcome inherent conditions of the environment is not necessarily and always an impoverished approach. After all, freedom to investigate the world extended human life (Postman, 1992) and allowed for the development of a human rationality (Postman, 1985;

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Postman, 1999). However, if the values of progress, efficiency, and individual autonomy go

unchecked, it leads to the tyranny of the individual (Arnett, Fritz, & Holba, 2007, p. 121).

Individualism destroys our bonds to other humans (Arnett & Holba, 2012, p. 198). The

community and the traditions tied to community become lost.

I also indicated earlier in this project the connection between modernity, the secular

trinity, and Neil Postman's articulation of technopoly. Extending on this argument, I want to take

a moment to discuss how technology and the culture of technopoly acts as an accelerant to the

goodness of efficiency. The collapse of tradition and the move from technocracy to technopoly

gave rise to valuation of efficiency. The power of invention and the idea that humans had an

infinite capacity to invent things rose during nineteenth century America (Postman, 1992, p. 42).

An invention can improve the efficiency of action. The cotton gin made the removal of cotton

seeds from cotton fiber much easier. The cotton gin removed humans from the cotton separation

process and the process became less labor intensive allowing for more productivity. Put simply,

the process became more efficient and more was produced at a smaller expense. With successful

inventions, the power of the belief in invention grew. As the power and rhetorical purchase of the

idea of invention grew, the values associated with invention grew in importance as well. Postman

(1992) explains, "The idea that if something could be done it should be done was born in the

nineteenth century. And along with it, there developed a profound belief in all of the principles

through which invention succeeds" including efficiency (p. 42). As inventions and technologies

rise and develop, it becomes easier to see whether the new invention performs more efficiently

than the previous technology. In the case of the cotton gin, we could see that it was more

efficient than pure human labor. Since we can easily see the new efficiency, then efficiency

becomes the value we use to judge. Now, the move that frightens Postman is the move to judge all things, including human relations, according to the standard of efficiency.

Although Postman does not use the term dehumanizing, he essentially sees the shift to judging all things according to the standard of efficiency as dehumanizing. Judging humans by efficiency robs us of our uniqueness. Postman (1992) writes, "It also came to be believed that the engine of technological progress works most efficiently when people are conceived of not as children of God or even as citizens but as consumers—that is to say, as markets" (p. 42). Technological progress becomes primary because this technological progress creates an efficiency, and the efficiency of the new invention or idea makes an appeal to humans, only if humans think of themselves as consumers. As an example, consider the "students as consumers" perspective that imbibes thinking about higher education. Students pay for higher education, and certainly, students want a high quality education. However, thinking about efficiency instead of the core values of learning disrupts the relationship between the student and institutes of higher education. Technology becomes a solution to the inefficiencies of higher education. Because technology and media can remove the barriers of time and space, students can complete courses and programs at any time and from any location (provided they have access to the requisite communication technology). Providing an efficient education vis-a-vis technology replaces the goal of providing a good education. Children of God are no longer children of God. Citizens are no longer citizens. Students are no longer students. Technology invokes its own goodness—the goodness of efficiency—once it enters the human sphere. Other human values become secondary. As McLuhan (2003) writes, "For any medium has the power of imposing its own assumption on the unwary" (p. 28). The assumptions of technology—namely, that it is efficient—replaces the traditional assumptions of religion, politics, and education. Humans

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become consumers who can see the efficiency of the new technology and make choices based on efficiency.

This is not to say that technology caused the idea of the goodness of efficiency. I am also not saying that technology turned people into consumers and markets. There are other factors at play such as the rise of the nation-state and capitalism. The tradition of media ecology—the tradition from which Postman works and a tradition informing this particular project—does not follow the path of hard technological determinism in saying that media/technology *caused* the goodness of efficiency. Instead, the media ecology tradition attempts to elucidate the consequences of media on the human condition (Strate, 2017b). Economics and the history of economic development on the human condition matter, but, as Strate (2017b) argues, "I would maintain that the environment is the principle [sic] factor, and understanding media as environments leads to the conclusion that media are primary" (p. 154). As Postman notes, technopoly results when traditions and institutions could no longer keep technology and technical thinking at bay. Technology becomes culture; that is technopoly. Postman argued that political and religious philosophers challenged the primacy of efficiency and technology, but their arguments did not have the rhetorical power of efficiency (1992, pp. 42-43). There were counter arguments, but technology won. Efficiency—and for that matter progress and individual autonomy—did not become a value because of the effectiveness of Frederick Taylor's (1911/1915) arguments articulated in *The Principles of Scientific Management* or Adam Smith's (1776/2003) arguments in *The Wealth of Nations*. Postman (1992) lists the names of authors who railed against the notion of "industrial progress"—William Blake, Thomas Carlye, John Ruskin, and William Morris (p. 42). These writers informed the way we might think about efficiency or industrial progress, but the environment of technology sets up who will be the winners and losers

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of the argument. Taylor wins because we can see the efficiency offered by technology. Media ecology, by looking at the environment, provides insights as to why efficiency becomes central and why Taylor wins.

There is another significant consequence for overvaluing efficiency. Efficiency operates as the justification for *technique*. Ellul (1964) claims that efficiency is "the fixed end of technique" (p. 21). Under *technique*, any method can be the right method as long as the method creates an efficiency. The mindset of *technique* suggests that we can find and implement the proper procedures to make our operations more efficient. For example, under the mindset of *technique*, there is no sense in debating what constitutes a healthy human body; instead, we argue about the means to achieve that healthy human body. The question of how best to implement replaces the question of how best to live, or the question of how best to live becomes the question of how best to implement. The popular psychology guiding books like *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People* (Covey, 1989) elide questions of what it means to be a good person and focus on how to be an effective person. It presumes that effectiveness is the goal, and the position that one holds is irrelevant. Now, for Ellul, this focusing on efficiency and technique has dire consequences. We may have overcome "ancient oppression" (Ellul, 1964, p. 428). Again, we have longer, more convenient lives. I do not mean to forget that there are those facing housing and food insecurity, but there is greater abundance than we had in the ancient or medieval world. On the other hand, we conflate these successes with success of the human project, forgetting that technique robs us of our purpose. Ellul (1964) writes, "In our cities there is no more day or night or heat or cold. But there is overpopulation, thraldom to press and television, total absence of purpose. All men are constrained by means external to them and ends equally external" (p. 429). Technique robs us of purpose beyond efficiency (ends). *Technique*

robs of actions beyond the appropriate method to achieve efficiency (means). To draw the connection back to Postman, we are merely consumers looking for the most efficient technology.

In this way, efficiency delimits human potential and the human condition. I do not presume that human potential is unlimited, but the environment of technology creates a scene in which our choices are predetermined. Constraints on the human condition are necessary, but we might ask whether the constraints imposed by a commitment to efficiency are worthwhile. As we will see in the next section, a commitment to efficiency can have a high cost, in that humans can become movable and expendable. Moreover, as Arnett, Fritz, and Holba (2007) suggest, efficiency lends itself to the tyranny of individualism. As a tyranny, individualism certainly constraints the human condition, as it leads to the tendency to turn toward oneself and away from others.

Robert A. Caro: A Loving Resistance Fighter

In this section, I argue that Robert Caro functions as a loving resistance fighter. We can think of Robert Caro as a loving resistance fighter because of committed distance from technology and because he commits to truth in the form of narrative, not scientific methodology. In order to establish Caro as a loving resistance fighter, I offer a biographical sketch of Caro. Beyond this sketch, I will discuss Caro's willingness to distance himself from technology as a way to clarify his own thinking and writing. I will also discuss how Caro explicitly resists the technolopical efficiency by writing about the life of committed technopolist, Robert Moses (1888-1981).

Biography of Robert A. Caro

Born in New York City in 1935, Robert A. Caro grew up near Central Park, the son of an immigrant businessman from Poland who could speak both Yiddish and English (McGrath,

2012). Caro's mother died when he was twelve years old, and because his father had a tendency to withdraw, Caro spent most of his time at the Horace Mann School or alone in Central Park sitting on a bench with a book (McGrath, 2012). At Horace Mann, Caro developed a penchant for writing and an interest in literature. Now known for his lengthy biographies, Caro had a tendency to write long essays, essays much longer than his peers. As an undergraduate student at Princeton, Caro completed a thesis on existentialism and the work of Ernest Hemmingway. His thesis was so lengthy that the English department created new rules on the length of senior thesis projects, at least this was what was told to Caro (McGrath, 2012).

Writing became central to Caro at both Horace Mann and at Princeton. Caro (2019) explained, "I started there [Horace Mann] in the seventh grade, and almost immediately I began working on the school newspaper. The paper meant something special. I don't think we were even conscious of what, but we knew" (p. 5). At Princeton, Caro wrote for both *The Daily Princetonian*, the newspaper, and *The Princeton Tiger*, the literary magazine (McGrath, 2012). At the literary magazine, he wrote a short story that was so long that it nearly became the whole issue. However, Caro began to find his calling at the newspaper. Through working in the print medium, he discovered that he loved to learn how the world around him operated and how to translate those operations to other people. Caro (2019) wrote, "I always liked finding out how things work and trying to explain them to people. It was a vague, inchoate feeling" (p 5). Writing and having the space to write became a means to explain and translate. Caro (2019) offers this compelling example, "At Princeton, I was the paper's sportswriter and I had a column, but I found myself writing more about the coach and about how he coached than about how the team was actually doing" (p. 5). Writing allowed Caro to dig deeper into the subject to offer a look

beyond the box score of any particular game, and the insights from this dig would offer a glimpse of how things might work.

After graduating from Princeton, Caro began work as a journalist for New Brunswick, New Jersey's *Daily Home News* in 1957. While covering an election for the *Daily Home News*, Caro encountered a group of African-American protestors who were dissatisfied with their access to the ballot. Seeing the disenfranchised had a profound impact on his orientation toward writing and reporting. Caro (2019) confessed, "But I had realized that I—Bob Caro—wanted to be out there with the protestors. Not long after that, I decided that if I wanted to keep on being a reporter, I needed [...] to work for a paper that fought for things" (p. 6-7). He applied for positions at newspapers more conducive to fighting for causes, and in 1959 he began work at New York's *Newsday*.

At *Newsday*, Caro became an investigative reporter and learned a valuable lesson that informed the rest of his career. Unsure of what it took to become an investigative reporter, Caro's editor at *Newsday*, Alan Hathway, provided advice that became Caro's mantra as a reporter and writer. Caro explains the encounter, "Alan looked at me for what I remember as a very long time. 'Just remember,' he said. 'Turn every page. Never assume anything. Turn every goddamned page'" (2019, p. 11). This lesson would inform the biographical works that marked the majority of his career.

In addition, at *Newsday*, Caro had his first encounter with Robert Moses. This encounter proved transformative as well. From the 1920s until the early 1960s, Robert Moses held a number of appointed and bureaucratic positions that allowed Moses to shape the urban landscape of New York City and New York State (see Caro, 1974). *Newsday* assigned Caro to cover the development of Robert Moses' plan to construct a bridge across the Long Island Sound (Caro,

2019, p. 12). To Caro, the plans for the bridge seemed to be foolish and many elected officials in the New York State government thought so as well. Caro (2019) wrote, "Everyone seemed to understand that the bridge was a terrible idea. So I reported back to *Newsday* that the bridge idea was dead and went on to something else" (p. 12-13). However, the idea for the bridge across the Long Island Sound did not die. Robert Moses convinced those who opposed the bridge to now favor the bridge. Moses changed the positions of the elected officials. Moses's ability to create this change transformed Caro's thinking about government and power within government. Given the centrality of this moment to Caro's career, I feel compelled to quote him at length. Caro (2019) wrote:

> I remember thinking, Everything you've been doing is bullshit. Underlying every one of my stories was the traditional belief that you're in a democracy and the power in a democracy comes from being elected. Yet here was a man, Robert Moses, who had never been elected to anything, and he had enough power to turn around a whole state government in one day. And he's had this power for more than forty years, and you, Bob Caro, who are supposed to be writing about political power and explaining it, you have no idea where he got this power. And thinking about it later, I realized: neither does anybody else (p. 13).

This moment became transformative for Caro because he realized that most people fundamentally misunderstand power in American society and American democracy. Robert Moses operated in a manner that did not comport with traditional perceptions and theories about power. Consequently, this encounter illustrated to Caro that, if he wanted to fight for the disenfranchised, he would need to explore how power worked. Taken together with the lessons he learned as an investigative reporter, he could not skim the surface to understand power. He

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would have to research and work to make discoveries about Robert Moses and the nature of power.

Despite this realization, Caro did not pursue his research into the lives of power-wielding men until an experience as a Nieman Journalism Fellow at Harvard. The Nieman fellowship gave journalists "a year at Harvard learning more about the areas they cover", and Caro spent his time studying urban planning (Caro, 2019, p. 14). Caro had an epiphany when taking notes in class. Two professors spoke on how engineers make decisions as to where to build a highway—taking into account a number of geographical considerations—and a thought came to him: "No, that's not why highways get built where they get built. They get built there *because Robert Moses wants them there!"* (Caro, 2019, p. 14, emphasis in original). No urban planning class could account for a person with as much power as Robert Moses. Caro, again, wanted to be a translator, to offer a glimpse into the workings behind the scenes of urban planning and development, to show how political power worked.

In 1966, Caro began work on his biography of Robert Moses, *The Power Broker* (1974). Through investigation, Caro believed that he "could find out where Robert Moses got his power—this power that no one understood; this power that nobody else was really thinking about, the power was just sort of there" (2019, p. 14-15). Caro did not simply hope to discover the sources of Moses's power; he sought to explain the origins of Moses's power and contribute "something that people ought to have about political power, not the kinds of things you learn in a textbook but the raw naked realities of power, about how power works in cities, how it really works" (Caro, 2019, p. 15). Building on his lifelong impulse to explain and examine and the lessons learned as an investigative report, Caro spent the next eight years writing and guiding *The Power Broker* to its release. Caro took this time and effort not for personal gain—Caro

nearly went broke trying to complete *The Power Broker* (McGrath 2012; Caro 2019). Instead, he took is time and was guided by the desire to research and share a deep understanding of how Moses could acquire that much power to shape New York and the people living in it.

The Power Broker comes in at over 1,100 pages and over 700,000 words. Prior to editing, the manuscript had over a million words. Caro earned the Pulitzer Prize for biography, and the book sold over 200,000 copies—a surprising feat for a book of its length (Nelson, 2003, p. 1). In 1975, Caro won the Francis Parkman prize awarded by the Society of American Historians; the organization awards the Francis Parkman Prize for what they regard as the best book on American history each year. Modern Library named *The Power Broker* as one of the hundred greatest works of nonfiction of the twentieth century. Beyond the length of Caro's work, or perhaps because of the length, Caro unraveled the mystery of Moses's power in the *Power Broker* by describing the political alliances both inside and outside of government in such a manner as to reveal Moses's efforts as extra-governmental—government, but beyond government at the same time; as Nelson (2003) notes, "Caro's genius lay in discovering that the how of Moses' power relied not just on these familiar elements but also on elements that Moses essentially invented or reinvented, especially public authority" (p. 6). The success of *The Power Broker* gave Caro the freedom to investigate and write about any subject (Nelson, 2003, p. 2).

Caro turned his attention to the life of the thirty-sixth President of the United States, Lyndon Baines Johnson (1908-1973). Caro wanted to write about someone with the ability to wield power on a national stage, and Johnson drew Caro's attention because of his success and accomplishments as the Senate Majority Leader (1957-1961) and leading the Senate from the President's office (Caro, 2019, p. 82). Since 1976, Caro has researched and written about the life of Johnson. *The Years of Lyndon Johnson* comprises five volumes: *The Path to Power* (1982),

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Means of Ascent (1990), *Master of the Senate* (2002), *The Passage of Power* (2012), and a final

volume that Caro is currently working to complete. Again, Caro does not seek to only tell

Johnson's story; instead, he wants to tell the story of power on a national stage. The research

supporting these volumes includes the examination of millions of documents and hundreds of

interviews (Nelson, 2003, p. 9). *The Year of Lyndon Johnson* earned Caro additional awards and

accolades, including the National Book Critics Circle award for best nonfiction book for *The*

Path to Power and another Pulitzer Prize for *Master of the Senate*. In 2009, Caro earned the

National Humanities Medal. Caro continues to live, write, and work on *The Years of Lyndon*

Johnson in New York City.

Caro's Distance from Technology

As I have reiterated throughout this project, one must keep technology at a distance in

order to engage in loving resistance to the forces of technopoly. Postman notes in *Technopoly*

(1992), that a closeness to technology allows one to become enthralled with the supposed

benefits of technology to such a degree that one cannot see the deficits of a given technology. As

I have stated in previous chapters, loving resistance as a philosophy of communication that adds

meaning to our communicative practices requires distance from technology. For Robert Caro to

provide the narrative ground for loving resistance to the goodness of efficiency, I must

demonstrate how Caro has distanced himself from technology. Distance from technology allows

one to distance oneself from technopoly's forces of ruination. Distance allows one to refuse the

inherent belief in the goodness of efficiency.

Like Wendell Berry who refused to buy a computer, Robert Caro does not use a computer

to write or even word process. He writes all of his first drafts in longhand. Because Caro will

take as long as a decade to publish a single work, he gained a reputation as a very slow and

deliberate writer. Even though Caro composed lengthy works as a student at Horace Mann, at *Newsday*, Caro gained the reputation as a "very fast rewrite man" and had no problems churning out newspaper copy (Caro, 2019, p. xi). However, when he began work on *The Power Broker*, Caro thought back to an experience while taking a creative writing course at Princeton. In that class, Caro quickly composed all of his work on a typewriter just prior to submission dates; his professor, poet and literary critic R.P. Blackmur, accused Caro of "'thinking with your fingers'" (Caro, 2019, p. xi). This moment informed Caro's approach to writing. Because of the centrality of this moment to Caro's loving resistance, I feel compelled to quote him at length:

> In that moment, I knew Professor Blackmur had seen right through me. No real thought, just writing—because writing was so easy. Certainly never thinking anything all the way through. And writing for a daily newspaper had been so easy, too. When I decided to write a book, and, beginning to realize the complexity of the subject, realized that a lot of thinking would be required—thinking things all the way through, in fact, or as much through as I was capable of—I determined to do something to slow myself down, to not write until I had thought things through. That was why I resolved to write my first drafts in longhand, slowest of the various means of committing thoughts to paper, before I started doing later drafts on the typewriter; that is why I still do my first few drafts in longhand today. (Caro, 2019, p. xii)

Although a typewriter, and today a computer, can offer efficiency and speed to writing, Caro recognizes that thinking must come first. The appeal of technology that enables fast writing serves as a detriment to the thinking process. Consequently, Caro rebuffed the rhetorical appeal of technology, speed and efficiency, in favor of the slowness offered by longhand.

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Caro's reason for avoiding the typewriter for the first draft—this also includes avoidance of the computer; Caro types all of his work on a Smith-Corona Electra 210 typewriter (Caro, 2019, p. xii)—speaks to the epistemological character of technologies and media. Postman (1985) argued that media functions as epistemologies shape how we conceive of truth (p. 17). More specifically, Postman contends that each medium of communication has a "resonance" that develops often unseen effects on culture—and individuals in that culture—that are "felt but unseen" (1985, p. 18). At first glance, a typewriter does not seem like a medium of communication. On the other hand, McLuhan classified the typewriter as a medium of communication that produced its own effects similar to other media (Gordon, 2003, p. 346). McLuhan (2003) wrote about the impact of the typewriter on poetry, "Seated at the typewriter, the poet, much like in the manner of the jazz musician, has the experience of performance as composition [...] He had themes, but no text [...] The machine is like a public address system immediately at hand" (p. 349). The typewriter creates a system of relations altogether different from the pen. The typewriter offered a shortcut to the printing press; it allowed for the immediate release of work.

Caro is not a poet, but he realized the effects of the typewriter nonetheless. Caro did not directly speak in the language of media ecology, but he did acknowledge the resonance of technology and media. The typewriter influenced the way that he thought and wrote. The typewriter could control and influence him, and Caro rejected the common belief that we control the technology, such as a typewriter. Consequently, Caro made the active choice to move away from the typewriter. For most, the use of a typewriter or, now, a computer seems like the most natural choice one can make. The typewriter allows for the immediate appearance of words. Words composed by a typewriter are ready for submission to a professor, or, in Caro's case, the

words are ready for the editor. The work becomes immediately available for another person. Writing in longhand admits that there will be another step before the work moves from student to professor or author to editor. The typewriter creates an efficiency, but Caro acknowledges that efficiency comes at the expense of thinking, a tradeoff he was not willing to accept.

Postman contends that rejecting the supposed naturalness of technology is central to the idea of loving resistance, and if one acts on the basis of loving resistance, one must reject the naturalness of technology. Postman (1992) states, "A resistance fighter understands that technology must never be accepted as part of the natural order of things, that every technology [...] may or may not be life-enhancing and that therefore require scrutiny, criticism, and control" (p. 184-185). In scrutinizing technology, a loving resistance fighter must observe the resonance of the technology. What does it produce beyond what I can see? In the case of a typewriter, what does it produce beyond the printed word? Critical analysis of technology requires evaluation of the credits and debits offered by a technological advancement. To control technology requires one to limit the infiltration of technology, or at least, make clear-headed decisions to adopt the technology based on the scrutiny and criticism applied.

Caro scrutinized, criticized, and controlled his use of a typewriter. While it took the efforts of Professor Blackmur for Caro to scrutinize his use of technology, Caro could feel the resonance of the technology. Caro felt as though he had been exposed. The typewriter allowed him to move quickly through his work, but the work produced with the typewriter was not his best work. Like any other student, Caro could have ignored his professor's comment, but Caro carefully analyzed the technology. Caro thought carefully about what the typewriter offered; he looked at the advantage of speed offered by the typewriter and decided to say, "No." The speed of the typewriter shortcuts thinking, and if Caro really wanted to dig deep into power in

American society, he could not shortcut thinking. Surely, a typewriter would make the process of writing move more quickly, but speed is not the desired end. Instead, the end would be to expose how power worked. This illustrates critical analysis of the technology, not acceptance because the rhetoric technology—speed and efficiency—seem natural. Because of the scrutiny and analysis, Caro made a concerted effort to control the technology. He placed boundaries around the technology. Certainly, he could not completely extirpate the technology, but Caro could make a clear-headed decision of when and where to use the technology. If the technology does not help him think through the subject, then it is not worth utilizing at the moment.

By controlling technology's influence on his thinking and writing, Caro can engage in the act of loving resistance. Caro resists the temptations offered by technology and technopical culture. Caro does not describe himself as a loving resistance fighter, but his distance from technology creates the parameters for resistance. We can see his resistance to technopoly and embrace of loving resistance in his own narrative of his working career as outlined in *Working: Researching, Interviewing, and Writing* (2019).

Caro's Commitment to the Truth in Narrative

As I clarified in Chapter 3, technopoly and, in turn, modernity, accepts science and scientific method as the primary system capable of creating truth. Postman describes this as belief in Scientism (1992, p. 143). Loving resistance, on the other hand, allows for other systems to produce truth. Consequently, a loving resistance fighter includes those "who take the great narratives of religion seriously and who do not believe that science is the only system of thought capable of producing truth" (Postman, 1992, p. 184). While *Working* (2019) does not explicitly embrace the narrative of religion, the text does reveal that Caro takes narratives seriously. For Caro, narratives are capable of producing truths about power. One need not test a hypothesis to

discover power; instead, for Caro, one can construct a narrative of power to bring power to light and scrutiny.

Story and narrative guided Caro's approach to writing *The Power Broker*. A city is complex, and understanding how a city forms, develops, grows, and/or declines requires theories and ideas to create coherence for these complexities. Caro fundamentally believed that he could tell the story of New York City and how power was wielded in New York City. He believed that stories could create a clear understanding of how the city worked and how power worked within the city. Caro believed that telling the story of New York City required telling the story of Robert Moses. He wrote, "The more I thought about Robert Moses' career, the more I realized that his story and the story of New York City were, to a remarkable degree, one story" (Caro, 2019, p. 35). While documented facts were important—and Caro certainly did not ignore them—in telling the story of New York City, the appearance of facts only make sense within the context of the story of Robert Moses. The story of Robert Moses produces a truth about New York City, and it was not a truth bound to pure scientific method. Writing and story could produce truth.

Robert Moses as Technopolist

Robert Moses operated as the archetypal technopolist. In making this claim, I am not saying that Moses made technopoly come to pass, but I am saying that Moses was able to bring the technolopical mindset into reality on a large scale. In researching Moses, Caro found that Moses possessed a certain type of genius: Moses "could look at a barren landscape and conceive on it, in a flash of inspiration, a colossal public work, a permanent, enduring creation" (Caro, 2019, p. 39). Once that inspiration came to pass, all Moses could imagine and all of his attention came to seeing his project through until the end. Moses saw the landscape, the communities, and people living in the communities as nothing; instead, the world was a landscape for him to shape

and control (Caro, 2019, p. 42). Moses could shape the world to match his vision and creative inspiration because he had political power, and Moses attained that power through the system of bureaucracy (Caro, 1974).

Postman noted that technopoly owes a great debt to the work of Frederick Taylor and his articulation of scientific management. Taylor's work provided the "scaffolding of the present-day American Technopoly" (Postman, 1992, p. 51). Taylor's scientific management, which describes how organizations can make their functions more efficient, contends "that the primary, if not the only, goal of human labor and thought is efficiency" (Postman, 1992, p. 51). While Taylor believed that efficiency could make the lives of workers more humane, the notion of scientific management worked well enough to disrupt traditions which previously supported human relations. Efficiency of human relations would replace human relations founded upon community ties, national identity, and/or the narratives of religion. Taylor's work found a home in the factory, assembly line, and corporate organization, and his work contributed to America's becoming an industrial giant.

Without Taylor's work, Moses would not have cultural purchase to move and alter the landscape. Efficiency of relations allows for communities to be bulldozed to create a new highway or bridge. Moses could move Taylor's work beyond the boundaries of the factory and assembly line. Moses could apply scientific management to the city and state of New York. In this way, we might see Robert Moses not only as an archetypal techopolist, but we can also begin to see scientific management writ large.

Moreover, Postman (1992) noted that "technical methods to control the flow of information" undergird technopoly (p. 83). Bureaucracies played a special role in articulating and controlling these technical methods. At first, bureaucracies were relatively benign in that

bureaucracies were created to make "transportation, industry, and the distribution of goods more efficient" (Postman, 1992, p. 86). With the measurable successes of making things more efficient, the parameters of bureaucratic institutions began to expand and now bureaucracy "claims sovereignty over all of society's affairs" (Postman, 1992, p. 86). Postman found bureaucracies especially troubling because of their focus on efficiency. If the primary goal of a bureaucracy is to make the flow of information more efficient, a bureaucrat, the person in charge of the bureaucracy, becomes absolved from what the organization does (Postman, 1992, p. 87). Put simply, once the focus moves away from what the organization produces and toward the notion of efficiency, it does not matter what the organization produces. Efficiency and maintenance of the organization's efficiency becomes paramount. Quantity and efficient methods replace quality and a just end. For example, an institute of higher education might have greater concerns for the number of students enrolled in a given semester than it has for the quality of education that the student receives. Certainly, high enrollment helps the organization, but if strong enrollment becomes the primary goal of an institute of higher education, the focus moves away from the quality of education.

Again, we can see how Robert Moses becomes an archetypal technopolist. As Caro noted in *The Power Broker* (1974), Moses built his power to control and shape the landscape of New York through bureaucracy and getting himself appointed to the head of government institutions. The people of New York did not elect Moses to a government position. Instead, Moses got himself appointed to government positions, and he became able to secure these positions over the course of nearly four decades because he made the bureaucracies efficient to produce clear and specific public roads and works. He did this without regard to the consequences of those projects on the communities removed by his bureaucratic institutions. Moses had very little regard for the

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communities paved over to create his roads and projects. Caro (2019) wrote about the following

exchange during an interview with Moses in which Caro asked Moses whether building a

highway in the city as opposed to the country could prove to be more difficult because of number

of people living in the city: "[Moses] waved his hand dismissively: 'Oh, no, no, no," he said.

'There are more people in the way—that's all. There's very little real hardship in the thing'" (p.

52). As a bureaucrat, Moses had little concern for the people that might be in his way or in the

way of a completed project. One could remove an entire community; it was all a matter of

efficiency—more people to clear, that's all.

Caro's Narrative Reply to Technopoly

The Power Broker illustrates that Caro found narratives central to exposing power.[5] *The*

Power Broker certainly tells the story of Robert Moses, and there is a difference between a story

and a narrative—people are willing to sacrifice themselves for narrative (Arnett, 2011, p. 48). In

Working, as mentioned earlier, Caro wanted to be with the protesters, the individuals left out of

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[5] I would like to add that Robert Caro's *The Power Broker* does not represent the only narrative

reply to the public works projects and power wielded by Robert Moses. Jane Jacobs's (1961) *Life*

and Death of Great American Cities also offered a narrative reply to Moses. Jacobs remains a

central figure in urban communication studies and the Urban Communication Foundation awards

a book prize in her honor (Urban Communication Foundation, 2021). Those interested in

responses to the brutal efficiency offered by Moses and in continuing the articulation of loving

resistance should also turn to Jacobs's work. A deficit of this project, and I discuss this in the

conclusion, is my restriction of loving resistance fighters to men. Jacobs may represent a figure

who expands the narrative ground of loving resistance.

the traditional political process. Caro began to see himself in the narrative of the powerless

fighting for recognition by the powerful. Caro wrote about Moses because he wanted to show

how the powerful maintained their power. As noted earlier, Caro faced financial ruin in telling

the story of Rober Moses's power. Although he had the privilege of an Ivy League education,

Caro was willing to sacrifice his family's financial wellbeing to tell a story on behalf of the

powerless.

Importantly, speaking on behalf of the powerless is central to religious narratives. In *A*

Short History of Ethics, Alasdair MacIntyre (1998) argues, "There is, for example, no reason to

quarrel with the contention that Christianity introduced even more strongly than the Stoics did

the concept of every man as somehow equal before God" (pp. 114-115). Christianity offered the

western world a new set of values that would shape the next two millennia (MacIntyre, 1998, p.

114). Even though some would use Christianity to justify systems of oppression and inequality,

Christianity itself contained the narrative and ethical resources to undermine and "attack" those

systems of oppression (MacIntyre, 1998, p. 115). Despite the fact that some would use the

narrative of religion to justify systems such as segregation, Christianity allowed for the Southern

Christian Leadership Conference and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. to pronounce the system of

segregation as unjust. Christianity, in part, gave King the moral authority to rebuke segregation.

Without the narrative of religion, justice and equality cannot reach all members of a society.

Certainly, justice has been secularized since the development of the values of the radical

Enlightenment and modernity (MacIntyre, 1998). However, current conceptions of justice and

speaking on behalf of the powerless drip with the residues of religious narratives.

Caro, who is Jewish, does not invoke religion as his justification for speaking on behalf

of the powerless; nevertheless, religious thinking about justice grounds his narrative and desire to

speak on behalf of the powerless. Moreover, he does not allow the narrative of technopoly to hold sway over his sense of justice. Postman (1992) notes, "The Technopoly story without a moral center. It puts in its place efficiency, interest, and economic advance. It promises heaven on earth through the convenience of technological progress. It casts aside all traditional narratives" (p, 192). Caro's *The Power Broker* does not acquiesce to Robert Moses and the notion of an efficient city. Instead, Caro wanted to give voice to a community destroyed by the efficiencies of Moses's New York. In particular, Caro recalls a conversation with an elderly couple who lost their community, East Tremont. Caro (2019) writes, "When I asked them how life was now, there had been a long pause, then the wife had said, 'Lonely'" (p. 52). The loneliness and isolation of this couple stands in stark contrast to the city envisioned by Moses. Again, Moses does not see this loss of a community as a cost at all. Caro, on the other hand, recognizes the toll of promoting the narrative of technopoly above all else—when one casts aside the human toll for the efficiencies of a toll road.

Related to this, recall another characteristic of the loving resistance fighter. Postman (1992) declares that people resisting technopoly are those "who do not regard the aged as irrelevant" (p. 184). The passage from *Working* describing the elderly couple from East Tremont illustrates Caro's regard for the aged. As indicated in *Working*, the couple informed the way Caro interviewed Moses, and the couple had been in Caro's thoughts as he prepared for the interview with Moses (2019, p. 52). An individual enchanted by technopoly would give little mind to the thoughts of an elderly couple. The thoughts of an elderly couple hold little sway in comparison to the supposed bounty of technopoly. However, Caro regards their perspectives as relevant to the conversation with Robert Moses. What happened to the couple's community and

their newfound loneliness and isolation matters to Caro. The aged are relevant, and their

relevance guided Caro's approach to writing *The Power Broker*.

Caro did not just offer the narratives of city dwellers; he also committed to telling the

story of farmers living on Long Island who had their lives disrupted by the plans of Robert

Moses. In *The Power Broker* Caro told the story of the Roth family farm. One of Moses's aids

came to the Roth family farm "and told them that the Long Island State Park Commission was

condemning fourteen acres from the center of the farm for the Northern State Parkway" (Caro,

2019, p. 58). The Roth family argued that the movement of the highway by just a small amount

would prevent the disruption of their farm and other farms in the area, but "Moses refused even

to consider the plea, saying the route had been determined by engineering considerations that

could not be changed" (Caro, 2019, p. 59). The narrative of the family farm could not match

Moses' narrative of science, engineering, and progress. The work and labor completed on the

farm had no sway. According to Moses, the efficient route, as determined by engineers, could be

the only route.

Clearly, Moses built his roads through farms and upended communities, so it would be a

mistake to say that Robert Caro and his narrative reply "won" this fight. Caro wrote *The Power*

Broker after Moses left his most influential positions and was ousted from power. However,

Caro becomes a loving resistance fighter because he did not allow Moses' bureaucratic

technopoly to remain unchallenged. It would be easy to simply let the roads and paths carved out

by Moses to remain standing and unquestioned, but Caro became willing to resist by offering

narratives of those individuals who lost out to technopoly and Robert Moses. Caro offered a

rejoinder to technopoly, and because of this, we have a deeper understanding of how power

works and of how power is used in service of technopoly. Caro offers some degree of justice for

those who are cut out by technopoly. They have stories to tell, and those stories are worth considering, not just the story of technopoly. Caro offers a story with a moral center; Robert Moses and technopoly do not have a moral center. This is Caro's resistance to technopoly—and its attendant focus on efficiency—through narrative.

Caro's Refusal to Accept Efficiency

This chapter contends with efficiency writ large. As a loving resistance fighter, Robert Caro's approach to writing and research in conjunction with his lived experience operates as a refusal of efficiency. A loving resistance fighter who works against technopoly's infiltration into human affairs and technopoly's disruption of tradition is someone "who refuses to accept efficiency as the pre-eminent goal of human relations" (Postman, 1992, p. 184). As I established in Chapter 3, challenging efficiency offers pushback to both Ellul's (1964) *technique* and the secular trinity of progress, efficiency, and individual autonomy (Arnett, Fritz, & Holba, 2007; Arnett, 2012). Caro's writing process, approach to research, and lived experience refuses to give into the demands of efficiency. As I will illustrate, this provides us with the narrative ground for loving resistance because Caro's work and life embody postmodernity's ethos cloaked by modernity's form.

Caro's Writing Process

If we go back to my discussion of Caro's distance from technology, we can see how Caro also uses his writing process as a rebuke of the notion of efficiency. "Thinking with your fingers" through the process of typing serves as a shortcut to thinking. Clearly, writing on a typewriter (now a computer) becomes an efficient way to write. Writing on a typewriter or a computer offers a shortcut to word processing. Writing a draft in longhand would necessarily slow down the writing process. However, Caro has made the deliberate decision to write in

longhand to ensure that he thinks clearly. By thinking clearly, he can write clearly, and by writing clearly he can disrupt manifestations of power in American society. His decision to write longhand serves as a rebuke of efficiency, but there are other elements of his writing process that also serves as a rebuke of efficiency.

In a culture dominated by the rhetorical pull of efficiency, people can become impatient. Our current digital media environment exacerbates the level of cultural impatience (Rushkoff, 2013). As mentioned previously, because of the length of his biographical books and because of his commitment to writing longhand, it takes Caro a significant amount of time to complete each work. For example, the third volume of *The Years of Lyndon Johnson* was published twelve years after the second. At the time of this writing, it has been ten years since Caro published the fourth volume, and there is quite a bit of anticipation for the fifth and final volume. As a result, Caro (2019) recalls exchanges such as this: "I would be asked, 'How long have you been working on it now?' When I said three years, or four, or five, they would quickly disguise their look of incredulity, [...] I came to dread the question" (p. 74). The expectations created by efficiency leads to the belief that one can and should write quickly to produce books. Those asking whether Caro was still working on the book, in this case *The Power Broker,* reveal the expectation of speed and minimization of effort to produce a finished product. As Caro ages, he feels even greater pressure to complete his final volume before he dies (Caro, 2019, p. xxiv), but Caro still does not like to be asked when the next book will be available (Caro, 2019, p. 187).

Given this pressure to publish, one might expect Caro to acquiesce to the pressure and commit to the notion of efficiency, but Caro does not value efficiency above all else. As indicated earlier in this chapter, Caro made a commitment to expose the true nature of political power. Noting Lyndon Johnson's ability to pass civil rights legislation and his actions deepen the

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conflict in Vietnam, Caro (2019) wrote, "*That's* political power. It affects your life in all sorts of ways. My books are an attempt to analyze and explain that power" (p. 4, emphasis in original). Exposing the formation and parameters of political power becomes an act of truth-telling, and, for Caro, writing operates as the best means to tell the truth (2019, p. 116). Caro believes that writing works well to tell the truth because it offers a record that can be verified and checked. In this sense, Caro shows himself as a man of print culture and the print mindset. Print allows for verification of facts; print creates the notion of an objective mindset and objective truth (Postman, 1985, p. 49). Because modernity rests on the notion that objective discovery of the truth can lead to liberation, one might conclude that Caro's approach to political power and writing about political power retrenches modernist thinking. On the other hand, as stated previously, efficiency and modernity have intertwined. A full commitment to modernity would be seeking out truth as efficiently as possible, but Caro rejects this notion. Caro (2019) states, "Truth takes time" (p. 112). One need not sacrifice the truth for the sake of speed and efficiency. This offers more evidence of Caro as a loving resistance fighter: his commitment to telling the truth about political power takes on greater importance than efficiency. Caro does not see efficiency at the center of human relations. The truth operates as a more important value.

Writing about and explaining political power proves difficult. Caro used the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 as an illustrative example (2019, pp. 170-171). John F. Kennedy wanted to pass this legislation but had little success; Lyndon Johnson, on the other hand, passed the legislation rather quickly once he became president (Caro, 2019, p. 170). What power did Johnson possess that Kennedy did not possess? What was the difference between these two presidents? Certainly, one could speculate and come up with reasonable explanations for the difference—explanations that might pass rhetorical expectations of argument. However, meeting

minimum requirements does not satisfy Caro. The passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 produced significant changes to the American political landscape, and Caro, guided by a commitment to the truth, wanted to offer a clear explanation of how Johnson brandished his power. Caro (2019) wrote, "That's why I tried to first figure out, then to explain, how Lyndon Johnson managed to do it. Hard to figure out, hard to explain it. Harder to do it" (p. 171). American technopoly offers convenience and ease (Postman, 1992, p. xii). Caro learned that exposing power could not be easy; it requires a doggedness and tenacity beyond the conveniences provided by technopoly. Again, "Truth takes time" (Caro, 2019, p. 112), and writing that can expose the intricacies of political power should take time. Caro's writing process demonstrates the importance of taking time.

Caro's commitment to longhand, as indicated earlier in this chapter, helps him to slow down and think carefully about what he writes. However, even though longhand does slow down his writing, he still commits to writing every day. Caro (2019) states, "And yet, even thus slowed down, I will, when I am writing, set myself a goal of a minimum of a thousand words a day, and, as the chart I keep on my closet door attests, most days meet it" (p. xii). Writing, then, becomes habitual for Caro, and, in this way, not only does Caro operate as a loving resistance fighter, but we can also see how Caro fits into the philosophy of communication. Arnett and Holba (2012) speak to the notion of "habits of the heart" within the philosophy of communication. Philosophy of communication seeks to add meaning to communicative practices. Guided by a sense of commitment to the truth, a desire to speak for the powerless, and distanced from technology, Caro's habit of writing one thousand words a day offers meaning to our communicative practices and loving resistance. Because he writes longhand, it will take Caro longer to complete his work, but this length of time allows him to think clearly through the issues

of power, so that he can expose and explain political power. Caro serves as a reminder that slow, continued practice has meaning. Caro offers an alternative to the convenient and the easy; he offers—and his writing process exemplifies—an alternative narrative to technopoly. Caro's habits of heart, his habit of writing, replaces the habits of technopoly and efficiency.

Caro's writing habits include more than just churning out one thousand words a day. Caro commits himself to editing and rewriting, an advantage offered by his commitment to longhand. Caro (2019) explains how he edits and rewrites, "I rewrite a lot. [...] And often there's been so much writing and rewriting and erasing that the page has to be tossed out completely" (p. 162). Having the advantage of working without a concrete deadline helps Caro because he does not need to meet a specified date, but his approach to writing offers a valuable lesson. Committing ideas to paper stands as only part of the process. One must continually interrogate one's own work. Writing involves more than just the finished product. Certainly, the finished product becomes what the community can use to understand the world and to shape meaning, but Caro's approach to writing illustrates that meaning exists in the process of writing. This is not to say that Caro's approach to writing and rewriting is the best means to produce a book; that would be the mindset of technique. Instead, Caro's approach to writing and rewriting provides us with a narrative to resist technopoly's demands for more information and to produce more information quickly.

As mentioned previously, McLuhan suggested that the typewriter allows the writer to play the typewriter like a jazz musician would play an instrument; the text of the work becomes secondary to the theme. Caro's writing process eschews this technology and allows him to develop a full plan for writing. After completing his research, Caro works to "boil the book down to three paragraphs, or two, or one—that's when it comes into view. That process might take

weeks. And then I turn those paragraphs into an outline of the whole book" (2019, p. 197).

Interestingly, Caro acknowledges, albeit implicitly, the visual bias of the print medium. A book comes into view; a reader (assuming they can see) sees the book as he or she reads. Outlining, too, operates as a visual means of organizing ideas. An outline allows a writer or speaker to see the layout of the entire text in order to allow the writer or speaker to judge the quality of the work and make revisions before the final product comes together. This process illustrates how Caro thinks through the print medium and orders his ideas according to what might work within print. Caro (2019) adds, "I can't start writing a book until I've thought it through and see it whole in my mind" (p. 196). Again, Caro has the ability to churn out copy and did this successfully as a reporter. When working on a book, however, a different process and technology becomes necessary. Books operate differently than newspapers (see McLuhan, 2003). Caro's process and decision to use longhand works well for the chosen medium, or, at the very least, his process slows him down enough to develop clear and cogent thoughts as well as clear descriptions and narratives. Caro's outline technique helps him to *see* the book from the beginning to the end.

The distillation or "boiling down" requires a significant amount of effort and thought, as Caro attempts to get his books to say exactly what he wants them to say. Caro (2019) states, "The boiling down entails writing those paragraphs over maybe … I can't even tell you how many times, over and over and over" (p. 198). Here, we can see the influence of Caro's movement from the typewriter and journalist to longhand and book author. In journalism, there exists a pre-packaged gist for the journalist—the who, what, when, where, why, and how. In books, or at least for Caro's books, the author must generate the gist—the thrust of the book. Caro's commitment to rewriting and editing the essential point or narrative of the book illustrates

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an additional rejection of efficiency. Many journalists-cum-authors could opt to stick with the *five w's and h* as an approach to writing, or they might opt to write the book then retroactively identify a theme or thesis, a more inductive approach to writing. Caro does not take this approach. He begins with the central premise. Starting with the central premise of the text suggests that the idea comes first, then the words to support the idea. While this means of writing a book might slow down the process and make the process less efficient, Caro commits to the idea and places the idea before the notion of efficiency.

Caro (2019), in continuing his explanation of the boiling down process, adds, "The whole time, I'm saying to myself, No, *that's* not exactly what you are trying to do in this book" (p, 198, emphasis in original). Caro wants the message of the book as clear and specific as he can possibly make it. In this way, Caro's writing process speaks to the seriousness of the print medium. Print, according to Postman (1985), makes language more serious (p. 50). Postman (1985) explains, "A written sentence calls upon its author to say something, upon its reader to know the import of what is said" (p. 50). Writing and print move seriousness and understanding to the forefront of communication. This is not to say that writing cannot be funny or unserious, but the medium of print, as Postman suggests, works to place understanding above all else. Caro wants his work to be clear; he wants his work to be clear so that people can understand it. If people understand his work, then he successfully elucidates the nature of political power in American society.

Understanding is not efficiency. In this sense, Caro's writing process bridges the loving resistance fighter to meet the philosophy of communication. Again, Postman contends that efficiency should not be placed as the central value of human relations, and a loving resistance fighter does not hold efficiency to be the most important value (1992, p. 184). Caro's writing

process indicates that he wants people to understand what he tries to write. In describing the first volume of *The Years of Lyndon Johnson*, *The Path to Power* (1982), Caro indicates that the book essentially tries to indicate where Johnson came from, why he wanted to leave his home, how he left, and how he used money to get out of the Texas Hill Country (2019, p. 198). The reader should come away from *The Path to Power* knowing and understanding these things about Johnson. Because Caro's writing provides such painstaking depth, the readers come out with a clear understanding of Johnson, even though it would take a significant amount of time to read the text. Caro does not concern himself with providing a quick read or a CliffsNotes version of Johnson's early years. Instead, Care takes the time to *explain and show* as a means to reach understanding. If Caro valued efficiency, he might have selected a different means, a more efficient means. Since he did not choose a more efficient means, he values understanding above efficiency.

Caro's focus on understanding links his loving resistance to the philosophy of communication. Although previous chapters illustrated the connection of Postman's loving resistance fighter and the philosophy of communication, I think it is important to stress Caro as a loving resistance fighter who, through his writing process, rejects efficiency in favor of understanding. We should remember how Arnett and Holba (2012) delimit philosophy of communication "to discourse that houses a sense of meaning and offers interpretive frameworks for understanding" (p. 9). Central to Arnett and Holba's description of the philosophy of communication is the "heart" and "practice" (2012, p. 10). Pushing off the work of Robert Bellah and Viktor Frankel, Arnett and Holba emphasize the notion of practices as "taking a stand against the inevitable permits one to engage in an element of dignity at a moment when life seems uncontrollable" (2012, p. 10). American technopoly and power in American society

become inevitable. No single person can stand against and overturn these particular forces, but Caro's approach to writing and his placement of understanding above the notion of efficiency does offer that "element of dignity" described by Arnett and Holba. Caro's writing process suggests that one can live a life without acquiescing to the latest technological innovation. His process suggests that one can think through ideas from beginning to end, if one places the seriousness of print and print's attention to understanding above selecting the best means to achieve an end quickly, the idea of efficiency. Because Caro does this, he adds meaning to our experiences and offers us a way to understand communication technology and American power beyond the quick and easy. Caro offers a way to live a life that moves beyond efficiency. Caro's valuing of understanding provides us a "framework for understanding" beyond the technopoly and the tyranny of individualism supported by the belief in efficiency.

Caro's Research Process

Earlier in this chapter, I discussed how the notion of "Turn every page" informed Robert Caro's approach to investigative reporting. Turning every page also speaks to Caro's approach to research. Like his approach to writing, Caro's approach to research illustrates the concept of loving resistance and offers a guide for resistance to the belief that efficiency should reign supreme and/or operate as the goal for human conduct and affairs. In addition, Caro's approach to research aligns with loving resistance and media ecology in other significant ways. His research process illustrates a commitment to understanding, not information. His research process speaks to the importance of narrative and common sense. His research process speaks to the media ecology precept of pattern recognition, and Robert Caro, even though he employs a research process, does not fall into the trappings of efficiency and technique.

As a reporter at *Newsday*, Caro discovered a passion for examining public and quasi-public documents and records. Early in his time at *Newsday*, Caro found himself researching a story related to the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), and an FAA employee granted Caro access to FAA documents and files. Caro (2019) described the sensation of going through the FAA documents, "There are certain moments in your life when you suddenly understand something about yourself. I loved going through those files, making them yield up their secrets to me" (p. 20). Even though the bulk of this chapter deals with efficiency, this moment illustrates how Caro embodies loving resistance in other ways. Postman (1992) states that a loving resistance fighter does not "confuse information with understanding" (p. 184). The raw data—data that can be both qualitative and quantitative—functions as information. Caro could have simply stopped there and published or described the information to which he was given access, but Caro recognized that something existed beneath and beyond the raw data of those documents. The documents lead to an understanding of how the FAA made decisions and who influenced those decisions (Caro, 2019, p. 10). Information itself does not lead to these revelations nor does access to the information. Human intervention provides meaning and brings understanding to the information. Caro (2019) discussed how this worked for him in this case, "But between all the pieces of paper, I found sentences and paragraphs that, taken together, made the point clear. I found enough to demonstrate that" (p. 10). Information was not liberatory or revealing, instead human intervention to information is revelatory, and Caro's discovery serves as a reminder that information does create understanding. Humans, and in this case, Caro, create understanding, and through the process of research and bringing meaning to information, we can discover something about ourselves.

Robert Caro, exemplifies how a loving resistance fighter can find meaning in the process of doing research. In a technopoly, we have ease of access to information and have more access to information than at any time in human history (Postman, 1992, pp. 60-61). Access to information does not provide liberation, and many of our most intractable problems do not result from a lack of information (Postman, 2006). Certainly, access to information alters our notion of research. In our contemporary moment, the phrase "doing your own research" appears everywhere, but few interrogate what research involves. In the digital age research can simply mean looking things up on the internet or on social media, and because of the algorithms of search engines and social media platforms/applications, one's research agenda will conform to what the algorithm produces. Caro, on the other hand, has a different orientation to research. As discussed earlier, Caro did not make discoveries based on one concluding document. He reached understanding through his own intervention into the documents. The research Caro did lacked the presupposition of digital media and the algorithm. Digital media did not process and produce the information Caro found. Caro discusses the uniqueness of what he discovered, "I don't know why raw files affect me that way. In part, perhaps, because they are closer to reality, to genuineness. Not filtered, cleaned up, through press releases or, years later in books" (p. 10). Caro reveals that there is value in going to the original documentation. Research does not include skimming the surface of the matter to find what is easily and conveniently accessed. Discovery and insight comes through thorough interrogation.

Caro's experiences illustrate that thorough investigation creates a life worth living and provides meaning to everyday existence. Research becomes time well spent. The invention of the clock altered our relationship to the passage of time, and the mechanical clock led to the dividing of human activity (Anton, 2011). The mechanical clock within modernity created an orientation

toward leisure that was quite different from the orientation toward leisure held in the ancient lifeworld (de Grazia, 1962). Caro's orientation toward research illustrates that research need not function as time doing drudgery. The mechanical clock helped to turn work into drudgery, and Caro's orientation toward research helps to delink work and drudgery. Recalling that evening searching the FAA documents, Caro (2019) writes, "I worked all night, but I didn't notice the passing of time. When I finished and left the building on Sunday, the sun was coming up" (p. 10). Time becomes incidental to the process of research. This does not mean that time becomes irrelevant, but research becomes a relevant way to spend time. For Caro, research can, if only briefly, make time recede in importance so that other values, such as truth, can take its place.

Caro's approach to research provides narrative grounding for loving resistance in another manner. I will mention again that "Truth takes time" (Caro, 2019, p. 112), and, again, this orientation speaks to an objective mindset. However, Caro does not fall into the trap of scientific objectivity gone astray—what Postman calls Scientism or an improbable world. Instead, Caro offers narratives as a way to reach the truth. Again, this speaks to the notion that Caro represents loving resistance because he takes narratives seriously. Caro's approach to research provides narrative grounding for loving resistance because his approach to research illustrates that developing a clear and truthful narrative requires time. Taking the time to research becomes more important in crafting a narrative than the notion of efficiency. While working on *The Years of Lyndon Johnson*, Caro interviewed Johnson's brother Sam Houston Johnson who had a penchant for telling wild tales about Lyndon Johnson that did not always sound truthful to Caro (Caro, 2019, p. 104). Through tenacity and by asking Sam Houston Johnson for more details about Lyndon Johnson's childhood, Sam Houston Johnson admitted that some of his stories were not true (Caro, 2019, p. 108). By asking for details, Sam Houston Johnson provided a much

clearer picture of Lyndon Johnson's upbringing; Caro (2019) writes, "I had a different picture of Lyndon Johnson's youth—that terrible youth, that character-hardening youth—than I, or history, had before" (p. 108). With those details provided by Sam Houston Johnson, Caro could confirm the stories. This confirmation and verification process might have resulted from Caro's journalism background. The process of verification in journalism operates as an attempt to match the objectivism of the scientific method (Patterson & Wilkins, 2011). Despite this, Caro does not fall into the trap of Scientism. Caro, instead, thought about the coherence of the story provided by Sam Houston Johnson; "The story at last would be coherent—and closer to the truth" (Caro, 2019, p. 108). For Caro, pure science is not the only system connected to the notion of truth. Moreover, the phrase, "at last" proves telling as well. Certainly, Caro could have accepted Sam Houston Johnson's word at face value, but Caro's instincts—common sense if you will—told him that the story lacked coherence and truthfulness. Taking the time to interview again and again, asking for more details, and verifying accounts, Caro takes no shortcuts. The efficient thing would have been to print what Sam Houston told him, but Caro's research process values truth over efficiency.

In addition, Caro's research process does not have the rigidity of Ellul's (1964) *technique*. Earlier in this project, I discussed the affinity between Postman's work in *Technopoly* and Jacques Ellul's work in *The Technological Society*. Caro's axioms of "Turn every page" and "Truth takes time" run the risk of hardening into the rationale efficiency of *technique*. If Caro refuses to alter these ideas or adjust them to the circumstances he finds in front of him, then those axioms turn into *technique*. Caro embodying *technique* runs counter to loving resistance, and, in turn, his approach to research would offer little to respond to and resist the scene of technology. Fortunately, Caro does not approach his subject matter with a hard fast rule that

must be applied in every instance. Take, for example, Caro's approach to conducting research in the Lyndon Baines Library and Museum (the LBJ Presidential Library) in Austin, Texas. The library simply possesses too many documents and artifacts to allow the "Turn every page" to take precedence. Caro (2019) writes, "I had known that doing research on a president would be a lot different from doing it on Robert Moses, but I hadn't expected anything like this [...] There would be no turning every page here" (p. 84). When confronted with a set of facts beyond his control, Caro did not place his method above all else. Instead, he recognized a different approach would become necessary.

Caro's research process also speaks to a central tenet of media ecology, pattern recognition. In *Understanding Media* (2003), Marshall McLuhan emphases the import of pattern recognition in understanding how media impacts the human consciousness. While there are differences between Postman's media ecology and McLuhan's (see Lum, 2006; Strate, 2006), Postman, throughout his corpus, acknowledges McLuhan's thinking on his development of media ecology. I do not suggest that Caro offers a media ecology or works as a media ecology, However, Caro's approach to research not only avoids the trap of *technique*, but his approach illustrates the efficacy of pattern recognition in seeking the truth. Again, this suggests that Caro's approach to the truth need not fall into the dogma of scientific method and social science. It can rely on common sense. I offer the following example to illustrate this point. Going into the LBJ Presidential Library, Caro had a hunch that Lyndon Johnson was able to rise to power through his connections to powerful Texas oilmen. A hunch, however, does not constitute proof or truth, even when telling the story that Caro wanted to tell. Caro knew that Johnson began to collect his power and influence when he was a member of the House of Representatives, so Caro made the decision to start his work to prove this point in the "'House Papers'" of the library (Caro, 2019,

p. 86). Caro, recognizing that he could not read every page, began to scan the documents and noticed a shift in the pattern of communication: there was a moment in the early 1940s, early in Johnson's tenure in the House, when Johnson shifted from entreating senior House members to senior House members starting to entreat Johnson (Caro, 2019, p. 87). Here, Caro thought, is where the evidence of Johnson's power might be found. Eschewing the notion that "Truth takes time," Caro made the decision to immediately contact and interview those individuals who were alive during that time to confirm his suspicions (Caro, 2019, p. 87). In this particular instance, Caro knew that the truth could not wait because the people and memories of those events would not last forever. Eventually, those interviews led Caro to go back to the archive, and he eventually had to go back for more interviews (Caro, 2019 pp. 87-98). Fortunately, Caro had enough evidence to make a claim that Johnson became a new and powerful source of political campaign funding (Caro, 2019, p. 96). Pattern recognition, verification, and acceptance of the limitations of his own axioms allowed Caro to tell the story of Lyndon Johnson's rise to power.

In thinking about Caro's approach to research, one should remember what Neil Postman claimed about the nature of social research. Postman (1988a) wrote, "The purpose of social research is to rediscover the truths of social life" (p. 19). Postman presumes that quality research is not new per se. Social research communicates and elucidates a truth that is always already present. A culture can know the truth, but it is social research that articulates and rediscovers the truth. Certainly, people in American society would recognize that money helps individuals ascend to power and that a person's childhood influences their adulthood. Caro's research does not stand as a "groundbreaking" discovery. Caro's research rediscovers the truth by illustrating and laying out these truths within a narrative. His narrative provides coherence for the audience. Putting this in terms of Walter Fisher's (1984) articulation of narrative coherence, Caro gives the

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actors in the story of Lyndon Johnson purpose, meaning, and reasons. The characters in the story that Caro tells about Johnson act in ways that we find consistent. The fact that Johnson's story "rings true" illustrates the narrative fidelity of the story. This is the rediscovery of the truth. Caro's approach to research reminds us that we can rediscover the truth without serving efficiency. The truth takes time, research takes time, and research is worth the time.

Caro's Lived Experience

Robert Caro's lived experience as a writer, researcher, and biographer also illustrates that he refuses to accept efficiency as central to human relations. As I will demonstrate in this section, Caro's routine and approach to writing offers a way for us to think about work beyond the notions of efficiency. In addition, Caro works in community with other writers, and this work with others serves as a reminder that loving resistance need not focus entirely on the individual actor but on the act of loving resistance itself. Caro's experiences serve as a powerful reminder that we must not place efficiency above all other concerns in our interaction toward our work and toward others.

Caro approaches writing and research as a job and works with professionalism. Because Caro writes about political power and is guided by the spirit of speaking for the powerless, it would be easy to create a romantic ideation of the work he produces. In addition, if we recall McLuhan's description of the effect of the typewriter, the writer becomes a freeform thinker much like the freeform jazz musician. However, Caro's approach to writing and research embodies the work of a professional. Caro does not write and work from home. Instead, he rents an office in the Fisk Building on West Fifty-Seventh Street, a few blocks away from Central Park, and near his office are the offices of accountants, lawyers, and other professionals (Jones, 2012). His office door only has his name, and his name is his business (Jones, 2012). For

Postman, loving resistance operates as what one can do to respond to technopoly "irrespective of what the culture is doing" (1992, p. 182). In media environments which destroy our sense of childhood and adulthood (Postman, 1982), our sense of place (Meyrowitz, 1985), and sense of seriousness (Postman, 1985), Caro's willingness to embrace writing and research from a sense of professionalism offers a rebuttal to what the dominant media environment asks. In addition, during a time when more and more people can work from home thanks to the internet and digital technology, Caro's decision to work from an office everyday offers a rejoinder to what technopoly and the digital media environment tells us what to do.

Caro's office decor and layout also does not conform to the expectations of technopoly. It appears anachronistic, or as one profiler described it, "The room is almost a temple to timelessness" (Jones, 2012, para. 4). Caro pins the outlines to his chapters to cork boards hung on the walls, and he has little more than a lamp, a single desk decoration, and a typewriter in his office (Jones, 2012; McGrath, 2012). In a time when the computer, high speed internet access, and a fun, playful environment are seen as the essentials to office life (Wiedeman, 2020), Caro's office lacks all of those items and characteristics. His space serves as a reminder that writing and research are serious matters, and the office and environment for creating serious work matters. There is a tacit or implied understanding that a different environment might produce different work. Anton (2011) suggests the importance of finding a quiet place to think and study, and this is how study can become a way of life—a way to make the work of learning valuable. Caro's sparse office—an office free from the distractions of technology and technopoly—affords him the space to make study, his research and writing, a way of life.

Although he mostly works alone in his rented office, Caro comes to work in his office dressed as if it were any other office setting. As a result of his success, Caro does not have

stringent deadlines or requirements from his publisher, but this comfortable arrangement might prove problematic by allowing Caro so much leeway that he might not produce the necessary work. Caro (2019) states, "I have no real deadlines. I'm never asked, When are you going to deliver? So it's easy to fool yourself that you are really working hard when you're not. And I'm naturally lazy" (p. 201). With comfort comes risk. The risk of not committing to the necessary work. To remind himself that he should be working, Caro dresses for work every time he comes into the office. He explains:

> So what I do is—people laugh at me—I put on a jacket and a tie to come to work, because when I was young, everybody wore jackets and ties to work, and I want to remind myself that I'm going to a job. I have to produce. (Caro, 2019, p. 201)

American technopoly has rhetorical pull and power because it can make life comfortable (Postman, 1992, p. xii). Now the comfort Caro describes does not come directly from technology, but, nonetheless, comfort creates a sense that everything is in order. Again, Anton (2011) argues that comfort allows for fecklessness by not offering the resistance to grow and strengthen oneself. Caro, through his lived experience, dresses professionally to remind himself that he is a professional. The serious work of writing and research cannot happen within an environment of pure comfort. The clothes remind Caro that there is work to do and that he is in the office to do work.

Now, this is not to suggest that work must be drudgery. One need not approach work with grand stoicism. One need not be detached from the serious work of writing and research. Caro's lived experience reminds us that work does not have to be toil. We can be excited for the hard prospects of writing and research. Caro illustrates how one can find purpose and joy when the research is purposeful and meaningful. Caro (2019) describes how he gets to work and what he

thinks about on his way to work, "I generally get up around seven or so, and I walk to work through Central Park outlining the first paragraphs that I'm going to write that day" (p. 200). Essentially, Caro gets up early because he treats his work as a nine to five job, even though he does not have a specific obligation to be at work from nine to five (Caro, 2019, p. 200). Caro (2019) explains why he thinks about writing on his way to work, "But the thing is, as you get into a chapter, you get wound up. You wake up excited—I don't mean 'thrilled' excited but 'I want to get there,' so I get up earlier and earlier" (p. 200). The ideas embedded in the writing create the excitement for Caro. One of the promises offered by technology is that it will relieve us from the drudgery of work, but Caro offers an antidote to this particular perspective. Caro offers the hope in finding the thrill in work, and, importantly, Caro does not need the most up-to-date technology to relieve him of the drudgery of work. The ideas excite Caro; the ideas create the impetus to go into work every day. Work can be serious and exciting at the same time, and one does not need technology to make work exciting. Caro's lived experience helps us to see that this is true.

I do not want to leave the impression that renting an office, having a spare work space, putting on a tie, and working from nine to five will offer a solution to the problems inherent to technopoly. To treat these as solutions suggests that it is easy to resist technopoly, or it might suggest that putting on a jacket and tie is all one needs to resist technopoly. I also want to disassociate Caro's approach from the "rise and grind" hustle culture that is entrenched in late capitalism (see Griffith, 2019). My goal, again, is to walk Robert Caro into the realm of loving resistance and illustrate how loving resistance can function as a philosophy of communication that helps us to respond to American technopoly and the secular trinity. To suggest that one needs to hustle like Robert Caro in order to overcome technopoly implies that technopoly can be

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overcome. That, to me, seems like a fool's errand. Instead, a more productive take would be to show how Caro's lived experience provides us the necessary narrative ground for embracing the philosophy of communication.

As mentioned previously, the notion of "habits of the heart" stands as a central concern for the philosophy of communication (Arnett & Holba, 2012, p. 9). Our habits and, in turn, our identity develop "from what we practice" (Arnett & Holba, 2012, p. 10). Robert Caro's practices as a writer and researcher—including his decisions to approach his work professionally despite the inherently individual nature of his work—provides the ground for us to embrace loving resistance. Caro shows us how one can practice loving resistance. Caro's lived experience as a biographer gives rise to the philosophy of communication concept of pattern. "Pattern" Arnett & Holba (2012) claim, "permits practices to become meaningfully apparent" (p. 11). The individual acts of renting an office, going to work in a jacket and tie, and approaching work with excitement matter less than the repeated pattern of these events. Continually engaging in these acts and practices creates a pattern in Robert Caro's life. These practices that form the pattern matter because, as Arnett & Holba (2012) state, "Practices that shape a life pattern can transform existence" (p. 11). Putting it all together, Caro's practices form into a pattern that helps us conceive of loving resistance to efficiency that helps us to transform our existence in the age of technopoly. In Postman's (1992) terms, "No one is an expert on how to live a life" (p. 182), but Caro's practices offer meaning in the historical moment of technopoly and modernity.

I would like to add two caveats to Robert Caro's lived experience as writer and researcher; both of these caveats remind us that Caro's lived experience does not form a pattern that shows the triumph of the individual. First, although the medium of print fosters a sense of individualism (McLuhan, 1962) and that Caro, alone, receives authorial credit and accolades,

Caro recognizes that his projects are not the result of a single individual effort. Throughout *Working*, Caro acknowledges his wife, Ina Caro, as his writing and research partner, much in the same way that Wendell Berry credits Tanya Berry. In addition, Caro acknowledges the role of his interview subjects in helping to craft his biographies. When interviewing First Lady Claudia "Lady Bird" Johnson, Caro (2019) acknowledges that the human subjects he interviews change and transform his way of thinking (p. 136). His interviewees are human subjects worthy of care and dignity, and by permitting those interviewees to shape his thinking, Caro does not allow his own voice to be the only voice coming through the text. Again, his works are not his individual efforts; they are the result of many different voices.

Second, Caro also eschews elements of individualism by pointing to the importance of working within a community of writers. In 1971, Robert Caro was still working on the book that would eventually become *The Power Broker*. Caro expected that the book would only take a year, but he found himself taking much longer to complete the project, much to his own disappointment (Caro, 2019, p. 73). Fortunately, Caro learned about and was admitted to the Frederick Lewis Allen Room in the New York Public Library; the reading room had space for eleven writers who were under contract with a publisher (Caro, 2019, p. 74). While Caro was happy that he would have a reserved space to keep his research materials, he found something more important than his own desk. Caro found a community of writers. Caro found that there were renowned historians and writers using the space as well (Caro, 2019, p. 76). Caro (2019) wrote, "And these writers provided more for me than merely the glow of their names" (p. 76). Caro learned that other biographers and historians were taking just as long, if not longer, to produce their work (2019, p. 77). Through his lunches and exchanges with these writers, Caro learned that he was not alone in his pursuits, and he learned how to work through the challenges

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he faced. Caro (2019) describes their conversations, "The talk was often about the problems of research and writing: about the mysteries of our craft, our shared craft" (p. 77). His experiences in the Allen Room helped to pattern the rest of his writing career. Caro learned that taking time on a book was not a deficit to the book itself. One need not produce a text as efficiently as possible. He found, through his consultation with others, that it would be okay for the truth to take some time.

This second caveat about Caro's lived experience also helps in providing narrative grounding for loving resistance, and his experience also connects to the philosophy of communication. Because loving resistance operates as an individual act "irrespective of what culture is doing" and an "individual response" (Postman, 1992, p. 182), loving resistance and being a loving resistance fighter, again, might run the risk of trumpeting the individual communicative agent. It might suggest that the individual communicative agent can rise above all circumstances to achieve fulfillment and liberation. However, taking into consideration Caro's experiences within the community of writers in the Allen Room of the New York Public Library, we can see that loving resistance is indebted to community members and community institutions. A public library is a community institution because the library is established by the community to provide resources for the community. The New York Public Library is publicly funded and a "provider of free books, information, ideas, and education to all New Yorkers" that was "founded on the ideals of free and open access to knowledge and opportunity for everyone" (New York Public Library, 2022). Caro's practices do not rise above all circumstances as a form of triumph of the world around him. Instead, his practices owe great debt to the specific community and historical circumstances in which he found himself. In this sense, the Allen Room and its community serve as what Arnett and Holba (2012) call a "communicative

dwelling" for Caro's loving resistance (p. 34). We have to understand Caro's lived experience

and approach to writing and research within the context of community. Community leverages

Caro's work outside the realm of individualism. Caro's loving resistance dwells within a

community; it does not stand above it.

Robert Caro: Postmodernity's Ethos in Modernity's Form

A reading of Robert Caro's life and biographical works might fold into our conception of

the narratives of the moderate Enlightenment and modernity. One might look at Caro as a

contemporary version of Edward Gibbon, author of the multi-volume *The History of the Decline*

and Fall of the Roman Empire (1776/2000). Caro's documentation of Robert Moses' and

Lyndon Johnson's rise and fall from power could be seen as what Lyotard (1984) called "the

Enlightenment narrative, in which the hero of knowledge works toward a good ethico-political

end" (pp. xxiii-xxiv). A short-sighted reading of Robet Caro's life and orientation to writing and

research might argue that Caro embodies the "hero of knowledge" seeking to bring about some

sort of positive end. However, reading Caro as a knowledge-hero ignores the practices and

patterns within Caro's lived experience. That reading ignores his orientation toward technology

and efficiency.

Instead, I offered a reading of Robert Caro's life and work as a loving resistance fighter,

and in this sense Caro's life and work functions as a petite narrative that pushes against the

cultural moment of technopoly and modernity. In walking Neil Postman's work on media and

technology into postmodernism, Strate (1994) frames Postman as the "champion of the modern

in a postmodern world" (p. 162). Postman, according to Strate (1994), does not accept modernity

as a whole; instead, Postman champions elements of modernity, especially the print

medium/environment (p. 163). Postman's last two books on education *The End of Education*

(1995) and *Building a Bridge to the Eighteenth Century: How the Past Can Improve Our Future* (1999) would certainly confirm Strate's assertion. Postman (1999) explicitly lauds the Enlightenment and discusses how the ideals of the Enlightenment contain the resources for a contemporary educational program. Postman never claimed to be a postmodernist, but as Strate (1994) writes, "I would argue that, however, that it is not necessary to speak postmodern to speak *of* postmodern" (p. 161, emphasis in original). Extending Strate's work, it makes sense that the loving resistance fighter, even though the concept might have some modernist tendencies, need not be considered an argument or act rooted entirely on modernist impulses. Consequently, Caro, as a loving resistance fighter, may embrace some modernist tendencies, but that does not mean he is a model for or emblematic of the "hero of knowledge" that Lyotard (1984) identifies.

Caro's life and work functions as a petite narrative in that he offers no grand solution or ultimate cause for political power. One criticism lodged against Caro is that he is long on description and short on explanation (Nelson, 2003). Caro goes to great lengths to describe how Robert Moses and Lyndon Johnson accrued and used political power, but he does not offer any conclusion on what might have driven these men to accrue and use political power. In addition, Caro does not really offer any real remedy to the problems of political power. Caro wanted "to *show* quite a bit about power through the life of a man" (2019, p. 81, my emphasis). Although Caro had personal motivations for writing about political power, his goal was to demonstrate how power formed and how power was administered. Caro never claimed to be a modernist or a postmodernist. These terms only matter in the context of the telos of the philosophy of communication in that modern and postmodern help us to create meaning for communicative practices. From the perspective of the philosophy of communication, Caro's work constitutes postmodern knowledge. Lyotard (1984) writes, "Postmodern knowledge is not simply a tool of

the authorities; it refines our sensitivity to difference and reinforces our ability to tolerate the incommensurable" (p. xxv). Caro's work reshapes our perspectives of political power. One can gain political power through a system of patronage, not electoral success—the case of Robert Moses. One gets placed at the center of legislative power, if one has access to political funding— the case of Lyndon Johnson. Caro brings our attention to the difference between our perceptions of political power and the history of political power. Because Caro does not draw theoretical conclusions about political power, he does not try to create a science of political power. He serves no theoretical or scientific master, other than the narrative coherence of the story. This is a postmodern move.

As such, his approach to completing his work operates as a petite narrative. Lyotard (1984) claims, "[T]he little narrative [*petit recit*] remains the quintessential form of imaginative invention" (p. 60, emphasis in original). The grand narratives of science and the Enlightenment, from the postmodern perspective, do not carry the meaning and rhetorical pull they once did. Instead, we must look to petite narratives, which might have coherence, but not necessarily the wholesale applicability of the grand narrative. Arnett, Fritz, and Holba (2007) explain, "The universal hope of rationality available to any person gives way to situated, blurred rationality situated within petite narrative structures" (p. 130). Technopoly and modernity offer themselves as universals to make sense of the life around us. Under the auspices of technopoly and modernity, we act because it is technically correct or because the act supports progress, efficiency and/or individual autonomy. Caro's life offers a mode of living that is not tied to these ideas. Caro reminds us that we can find meaning in working slowly, researching slowly, and engaging in patterns that bring us to community and professionalism. Caro's life is not a life to

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be followed or exemplified, but it is a narrative home for resisting technopoly—a home for the act of loving resistance.

A Sense of Place

In *No Sense of Place* (1985), Joshua Meyrowitz, a student of Neil Postman and a graduate of the media ecology doctoral program at New York University, discusses the impact of electronic media on our understanding of social conventions and situations. Meyrowitz (1985) claims that "electronic media—especially television—have led to the overlapping of many social spheres that were once distinct" (p. 5). In essence, people come into contact with other people in patterns that are far different than they once were. Digital technology only exacerbates this phenomenon. For example, I have a Twitter account, but that Twitter account is publicly available. My students, my friends, and my employers can see what I tweet, retweet, and like. The technology disrupts the relationships of student-teacher, friend-friend, and employee-employer. The conventions for communicating in each situation collapse, so when I post or like something on Twitter, I have to consider who will see and read what I post and like. The medium of communication sets the boundaries of communication. In a sense, at one point, my communication with my students was grounded by the classroom context or the medium of the classroom. Now, my communication is grounded by digital technology, an entirely different context. However, the residues of traditional patterns of communication and social situations still persist, creating confusions and frustrations.

Because media collapses these boundaries, Meyrowitz (1985) claims that thanks to electronic media we have no sense of place, no sense of the social situation. The shift from print media to electronic media precipitated these changes (Meyrowitz, 1985, p. 308). Electronic media created a different sense of place than the senses created by print. Meyrowitz (1985)

explains, "Electronic media have combined previously distinct social settings, moved the dividing line between private and public behavior toward the private, and weakened the relationship between social situations and physical places" (p. 308). In essence, what was once strictly private now becomes public, the norms of private behavior and communication now become acceptable norms for public behavior. Communication once reserved for intimate social situations and intimate physical places now become acceptable in public social situations and physical places. The realm of private and intimate, as set up by print media, moves into a different space and place. The blurred lines create a feeling or a media environment that leaves interlocutors without a sense of place.

In *No Sense of Place*, Meyrowitz stops short of making a clear value judgment of the shift from print to electronic media. Meyrowitz (1985) states, "Just as the new environment is neither inherently better nor worse than the old, neither is it inherently more real nor false—though there have been claims in both directions" (p. 320). In this sense, even though Meyrowitz was a student of Postman's, he aligns himself closer to Marshall McLuhan's belief that one must withhold judgment of media and technological changes in order to fully understand their consequences. Postman (2006), on the other hand, held that a media ecologist should always have an eye on the moral consequences of environmental change and should render judgment on new media and technology. As noted by Gencarelli (2006), Postman was a staunch defender of the medium of print. Postman would agree with Meyrowitz's assertion that electronic media changed our sense of place; our sense of place, thanks to electronic media, is different than our sense of place was when print was the dominant medium. Postman would, and did, go a step beyond that idea. He would, and did, argue that this shift to electronic media deteriorated the human condition. You can see the judgment of media in *Technopoly* as well as in *Amusing*

Ourselves to Death (1985) and *The Disappearance of Childhood* (1982). Technology should not become culture. Politics and religion should not be turned into nonsense. Childhood should be protected. If media disrupts these valued traditions, then it is acceptable to render judgment. Postman (2006) asks to fully consider whether a phenomenon like a lost sense of place is good or bad.

Consequently, the loving resistance fighter who takes up Postman's cause does not view the lost sense of place with ambivalence or neutrality. Moreover, given the dire consequences of an overvaluation of efficiency, the loving resistance fighter is not a bystander. Robert Caro's life and work provides the narrative grounding to return us to a sense of place; he provides the rhetorical resources to act as a loving resistance fighter who values a sense of place. Caro articulates the sense of place in ways that are different from Meyrowitz, but the practical value Caro assigns to the sense of place elucidates how his loving resistance can return us to a sense of place.

Caro (2019) argues that a "sense of place" is essential to writing in general, and writing about history in particular (p. 141). Caro (2019) describes writing with a sense of place as "helping the reader to visualize the physical setting in which a book's action is occurring: to see it clearly enough, in sufficient detail, so that he feels as if he himself were present while the action is occurring" (p. 141). A biographer and writer of history cannot discount, smudge, smear, or evade the facts of the event; a writer doing history must start by obtaining the facts and ensuring that the facts are accurate (Caro, 2019, p. 141). Placing the facts, offering a location for the facts, helps the reader understand and gain meaning from the text (Caro, 2019, p. 141). In *The Years of Lyndon Johnson*, Caro took the time to describe and locate the facts in the place that Johnson grew up, Texas Hill Country, and the place that informed him as a young adult,

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Capitol Hill, (Caro, 2019, p. 142). Caro took the time to get to know these places, and by taking

the time to get to know these places, Caro transforms facts and pure information, into meaning.

To say that Lyndon Johnson was born in Stonewall, Texas in 1908 is a fact. The location and

date of Johnson's birth is pure information. However, a sense of place, writing about the

hardscrabble life of Hill Country, Texas in the early twentieth century transforms that

information into meaning. The reader gains a sense of what it meant to be born into that part of

the country in that particular point in history. Place offers a home to facts, giving facts meaning.

Caro's work offers a reminder of this. In an environment dominated by electronic media that

diminishes our sense of place, Caro offers resistance by reminding us of the importance of the

sense of place.

Caro's reminder of the sense of place also serves to connect loving resistance to the

philosophy of communication. Arnett and Holba (2012) articulate the importance of the

historical moment and draw the metaphor that the historical moment acts as a fulcrum that

leverages the discourse into meaningful practices (p. 12). Without understanding the historical

moment, the philosophy of communication can do little (Arnett & Holba, 2012, p. 12). Caro's

attentiveness to a sense of place has two implications to the philosophy of communication. First,

in writing history, place becomes important as it provides meaning for historical information. For

example, it matters that Neil Postman wrote and worked during the rise of the television and

electronic media. History gives us a sense why Postman responded the way in which he did. He

could see the transition away from print to television. This understanding of the historical

moment enriches our understanding of Postman. His philosophy of communication was not

disconnected from the patterns of everyday life; on the contrary, he was connected to those

patterns. Second, Caro's attentiveness to the sense of place serves a rejoinder to our lost sense of

place in this historical moment. Caro's practices carry meaning for us at this particular historical moment. Not only does Caro provide us the resources to respond to the supremacy of efficiency, but he also returns us to a sense of place. Caro's loving resistance has value for this particular historical moment in which we find ourselves.

Like Wendell Berry, Caro reminds us of the importance of the print medium to loving resistance through his commitment to the sense of place. Caro (2019) argues that writing—done correctly, by taking time and giving attention to fact and detail—can show place to a reader (p. 158). In an electronic age, it is hard to disassociate seeing with images and video. Caro's attention to place argues that writing and the print medium can operate as a place to see. What we see in print is different from what we see in electronic media. Given that print, and in particular books, are a whole piece, we can get to a sense of why. Caro even argues that by showing place, we get a sense—but not a pure conclusion—of why Johnson was motivated to obtain power (2019, p. 154). The commitment to print allows the reader to see why actions occur because they can see actions within a particular place. The actions now make sense. At the risk of sounding circular, writing a place returns us to a sense of place. Caro offers the resources to return to a sense of place—a place in which actions correspond with physical location. Caro's narrative grounding for loving resistance offers a way for us to become *re-placed*. Loving resistance, through the practice of writing, re-places communicative action.

Conclusion: Loving Resistance as an Act of Narrative Creation

In this chapter, I discussed how technology and invention justified and legitimated efficiency as a standard of moral judgment. Second, I discussed how Robert Caro's distance from technology and commitment to narrative worked to resist Robert Moses's push for technological efficiency—these moves illustrate Caro's acts as act of loving resistance. Third, I

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discussed how Robert Caro's writing, research, and lived experience offer coordinates for a petite narrative that helps us to think beyond the standards of efficiency demanded by technopoly. Fourth, I discussed how Caro elevates writing and print to return his readers to a sense of place in an era of electronic and digital media that strips us of the notion of place. Putting these ideas together, Robert Caro's life and work offers a way back to place that allows us to think through act of loving resistance, and we can construct a narrative that provides meaning for our resistance to the forces of technopoly and the primacy of efficiency.

At the beginning of this chapter, I discussed Douglas Rushkoff's (2019) metaphor of mechanomorphism, the idea that humans emulate and take on qualities of machines. Rushkoff (2019) describes this phenomenon, "As a society, we took on the machine's values of *efficiency*, productivity and power as our own. We sought to operate faster with higher outputs and greater uniformity. In the digital age, we think of our world as computation" (p. 709, my emphasis). The digital age only exacerbates and reifies the importance of efficiency. In the same way that Postman developed loving resistance as a response to technopoly, Rushkoff developed the notion of Team Human as a response to mechanomorphism and the digital media environment we currently face. At the end of *Team Human*, Rushkoff argues that those who want to resist the forces of the digital media environment—and I would also say technopoly—must organize to regain a sense of collective purpose that pushes against the sense of individual purpose (2019, p. 199). Rushkoff advocates a bottom-up approach for this type of collective action, and in order to launch this bottom up approach, we must begin with place (Ruskoff, 2019, p. 200). The members of Team Human can find each other in local places; "Solidarity begins in place" (Rushkoff, 2019, p. 200). Consequently, there is a conundrum at work here. Electronic media strips us of

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our sense of place, but we need a sense of place to resist the deleterious forces of electronic and digital media.

The lessons drawn from Robert Caro's loving resistance to technopoly helps us to work through this conundrum. As illustrated earlier, Caro teaches us the importance of narrative response to the value of efficiency pushed by technopoly and modernity. Loving resistance need not be limited to an appreciation of narrative to reach the truth, nor does loving resistance need to be limited to simply pushing against the notion of efficiency. Postman only gives us those parameters of loving resistance, but he does not articulate fully as to how one should act given those parameters. Caro, on the other hand, does inform us how to act by providing us with the narrative grounding for specific action. We can engage in loving resistance through the building of narratives that correspond with truth. Narratives that, according to Walter Fisher (1984), speak to our sense of narrative fidelity and narrative coherence. More specifically, we can build narratives grounded in media ecology as a way to respond to the digital media environment. As Postman (1988a) writes, "Specifically, the purpose of media ecology is to tell stories about the consequences of technology" (p. 18). While I might conflate the notions of narrative and story as described by Arnett (2011), in this particular instance, the difference is negligible because Postman describes the stories of media ecology as stories that contain risk—we can fight for these stories because the stories of media ecology ask us to consider the consequences of media environments. As we have found, people are willing to fight for the narrative of climate change because of the risks associated with climate change to the environment. If media ecology can demonstrate the risks of digital media on the human condition (Strate, 2017b) or the semantic environment (Postman, 1976) and if media ecology can demonstrate that technopoly and the digital media environment *worsen* our condition, then we have the grounds for struggle. The

dangers of efficiency are here, so, taking the lesson from Robert Caro, let us use media ecology to tell the stories to respond to this danger.

While the breadth and depth of scholarship coming from the tradition of media ecology is expanding and ongoing—one need only take a look at the volumes of the scholarly journal for the Media Ecology Association, *Explorations in Media Ecology*, to get a sense of the breadth and depth—scholars, educators, and students interested in the tradition of media ecology get little sense of how we can go through the day-to-day process of crafting narratives. Moreover, as I have demonstrated, everyone, thanks to the prevalence of *technique*, must contend with the demands of efficiency. Robert Caro's approach to working offers us another way of doing the work of media ecology to build narratives. Caro provides the grounding for the habits and pattern of doing media ecology by reminding us that we need not give primacy to efficiency to do good work. Loving resistance tells us that there is an immediate moral imperative to respond to technopoly, but Caro reminds us that we need not work efficiently to respond. Again, the truth takes time, and loving resistance embodied by telling truthful stories about the consequences of the media environment can take time as well. However, taking our time does not mean that we are not acting. Instead, Caro reminds us that we can work every day and stick to patterns that help us to build truthful narratives. There is value in doing the scholarship, not just in publishing the scholarship. In doing the scholarship and work of media ecology, even if it takes time, we resist the forces of efficiency. Again, as Postman (1992) indicates there is no single person who is an expert on living a life (p. 182), but Caro's life of scholarship and writing provides us with a path to resistance.

Despite forces that might seek to fragment it, schools and institutes of higher education still exist. While there are pushes for more and more asynchronous learning environments that

are structured by digital and electronic media, the educational system in the United States still depends on physical locations and physical places. Postman (1970) initially envisioned media ecology as a curriculum within the educational system that would help students cope with the changes wrought by electronic media. Given the physical structure offered by the educational system, it is my belief that schools can become the place for resistance to technopoly and the physical grounds to foment the need for Team Human; Robert Caro's loving resistance provides communication and media scholars/educators a pathway to thinking about loving resistance in the classroom. In particular, Caro's commitment to writing and the print medium reminds of the importance of place. We can write place into our narratives while we are in a place (schools). Gencarelli (2006) reminds us that Neil Postman's media ecology operates as a type of media literacy and media education (p. 240), and Postman's media ecology seeks to conserve the print medium as way to provide balance again the dominance of electronic media (p. 248). However, communication and media students tend to bristle at the notion that a tradition as interpretive as media ecology can offer anything but a purely subjective perspective (McCullough, 2021, p. 262). Caro and his commitment to truth, on the other hand, illustrates how narratives with a strong sense of place can build truths about political power. In this sense, Caro illustrates how narratives function as legitimate forms of knowledge, and narratives can function as a legitimate form of knowledge because they, borrowing the visual metaphor, show place.

In other spaces, I have argued that media ecology as an academic endeavor must avoid succumbing to *technique* and must actively promote tradition, narratives, and practice (McCullough, 2021). This chapter builds on this particular argument by illustrating Robert Caro as a loving resistance fighter. Caro is a loving resistance fighter who illustrates a commitment to an inefficient life. He writes slowly, but the practice of writing slowly has value. Caro tells

stories, but the stories contain a coherence that corresponds with the truth. He follows the tradition of investigative journalism and doggedly pursues the truth to speak on behalf of the powerless. In this sense, Caro not only adds to our understanding of loving resistance, but he also exemplifies what media ecology can be. If we set aside the demands placed upon us by efficiency, then we can critically engage in the practice of narrative creation to work against the power of technopoly, and the classroom can be the place to share these stories and build solidarity in resisting technopoly.

Again, Rushkoff (2019) indicates that we cannot struggle against the digital media environment by ourselves. In the same vein, we cannot resist technopoly by ourselves. There needs to be collective action, but unfortunately, as Arnett, Fritz, and Holba (2007) contend, the primacy of individual autonomy prevents us from thinking about the other and collective action. For loving resistance to work, it must consider the pressures put upon us by the belief in individual autonomy. In the next chapter, I will offer ways to navigate the cultural milieu of individual autonomy through loving resistance.

Chapter 6: Myles Horton's Narrative Ground for Loving Resistance to Individual Autonomy

Introduction

Just over twenty years ago, political scientist Robert Putnam published *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of the American Community* (2000). Putnam argued that in the United States civic engagement and the bonds to community were always rising and falling, but despite all of these rises and falls there remain benefits to engaging with others and working within a community. *Bowling Alone* developed an argument for social connection; "we Americans need to reconnect with one another," wrote Putnam (2000, p. 28). Nearly twenty years after *Bowling Alone*'s publication, media ecologists Douglas Rushkoff (2019) and Eric McLuhan (2019) concluded that the digital media environment and digital technologies have exacerbated the trend of separation of individuals from community. If we concede the value of human connection and community to the functioning of civic society, the impact of the digital media environment in separating humans from one another appears to be deleterious. As I have mentioned previously throughout this project, Arnett, Fritz, and Holba (2007) contend that the tyranny of individualism—the tyranny that the individual is always more important than community—rests upon the belief in progress, efficiency, and individual autonomy. In previous chapters, I discussed the ways in which loving resistance can help us to navigate the problems of progress and efficiency. This chapter contends with the problem of individual autonomy. If community and civic engagement improve our collective experience and if technopoly and the digital media environment diminishes our collective experience, then we must consider how to resist both individual autonomy and the environment/culture of technopoly that promotes autonomy. Loving resistance provides the narrative ground that helps us to operate as best we can within the environment of technopoly.

Education and schools offer some hope in resisting the forces of technopoly and the sway of individual autonomy . As Postman (1979) notes, nearly everyone in the United States is subjected to some form of schooling. However, as Plugh (2020) notes, "We have forgotten the primary lesson of schooling—the understanding of community, public life, shared responsibility, shared authority and so on" (p. 491). Therefore, in thinking about loving resistance and our response to the individual autonomy that is advanced through technopoly, I turn to a loving resistance fighter who champions the value of education and the collective experience of schools. In this chapter, I offer educator and activist, Myles Horton (1905-1990), as a loving resistance fighter. Horton's approach to education and learning that he developed and practiced at the Highlander Folk School (now called the Highlander Research and Education Center) in Tennessee illustrates how individual autonomy need not center human relations. Horton's life and career illustrate the importance of working in community, and Horton explicitly rejects the predominant "bad faith" in the individual autonomy tenet of the secular trinity that Arnett, Fritz, and Holba (2007) and Arnett (2012) outlined. Moreover, Horton exemplifies the loving resistance outlined by Postman (1992) through his insistence on working with people in face-to-face contexts, his commitment to the print medium, his regard for religious narratives, and faith in the elements of the American narrative. Through these commitments, Horton's life offers narrative grounding for loving resistance, and he, therefore, makes the act of loving resistance legible to those who seek to resist the forces of American technopoly.

In order to develop Horton as a loving resistance fighter and develop these claims, this chapter will proceed in the following manner. First, I will outline the belief in the goodness of individual autonomy that centers human activity in our technopoly. Second, I will offer a biographical sketch of Myles Horton and establish his life as one of loving resistance. Third, I

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will discuss Horton's refusal of individual autonomy. Fourth, I illustrate Horton's educational philosophy as a philosophy of communication that attends to Postman's (1976) articulation of the semantic environment. I will close by offering some implications of my analysis for both listening and dialogic ethics.

Individual Autonomy

As mentioned elsewhere in this project, the moderate Enlightenment fostered the belief in the inherent goodness of individual autonomy (Arnett, Fritz, & Holba, 2007, p. 121). As an unintended consequence of the radical Enlightenment that sought to push against the repressive forces of monarchies in western Europe, a new set of values replaced the older set of values that where inherent to the older monarchical regimes and Christianity. Arnett, Fritz, and Holba (2007) write, "Moderate Enlightenment fostered ideological blindness, assuming the universal truth, value, and goodness of progress, efficiency, and individual autonomy" (p. 121). While the goods of progress, efficiency, and individual autonomy created space for the individual communicative agent to grow and thrive in new and different ways, these goods became unquestioned and led to a tyranny of individualism (Arnett, Fritz, & Holba, 2007, p. 121). This tyranny of individualism undermined traditions bound to community and empathy for the other. Under this tyranny of individualism supported by the belief in the goodness of individual autonomy, the communicative agent is constructed as "one who imagines oneself to stand above history—or, put differently, to walk on water" (Arnett, Fritz, & Holba, 2007, p. 122). In this sense, the individual communicative agent is non-derivative. The individual communicative agent is not bound to any history, community, or other.

Many postmodern scholars have sought to undermine the tyranny of individualism and expose it as a "lie" (Arnett, Fritz, and Holba, 2007, p. 122). However, as noted in the previous

chapters, technopoly and the digital media environment have undermined social cohesion, and technopoly and the digital media enviormnent worked to keep individualism at the center of human social life (Rushkoff, 2019). This particular project and chapters seeks to contribute literature of postmodern scholarship by discussing the ways in which loving resistance can specifically respond to the individualism embedded in our current technopoly and digital media environment. Not all postmodern scholars consider the impact of media and technology on the human condition, or if they do consider media and technology, they are on the periphery of the story. Media ecology, on the other hand, by studying media as environments centers analysis on the technological apparti that center human life and human communication (Strate, 2017b). The approach of media ecology elucidates elements that other postmodern scholars might miss. If individual autonomy undergirds individualism, then media ecology asks: how do media environments support the growth and development of individual autonomy? The media ecology tradition demands that we consider the environmental factors created by media and technology.

In addition, I want to take a moment to distinguish between individualism and individual autonomy. Individualism operates as a cultural milieu. Arnett, Fritz, and Holba (2007) describe individualism in terms of communicative practices in which speaking replaces listening (p. 120). Under individualism, a conversation begins when someone speaks, not when two interlocutors find themselves in space together, ready to listen. Individualism presumes that the person speaking has total control over the conversation (Arnett, Fritz, & Holba, 2007, p. 120). The other individuals in space matter less than the person articulating the ideas. The notion of control expands to other arenas of communicative life. Citing Alexis de Tocqueville's *Democracy in America* (1835/2000), Arnett and Holba (2012) discuss how the elements of radical Enlightenment present in early American society, the individual as a sovereign actor who could

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create laws and government unbound to the traditions of monarchy, led to an ill-conceived practice of individualism (p. 198). Early American society took sovereignty to the extreme, and individuals believed that their own untethered experiences were what matter most when making decisions (Arnett & Holba, 2012, p. 200). Questions concerning laws, government, and social relations focused on the experiences of the individual, not the community. The question "Is this good for me?" replaced the question "Is this good for the community?" When community fades into the background and the individual agent becomes central, there comes a "closure of the American mind" (Arnett & Holba, 2012, p. 199). The individual communicative agent and their attendant experiences becomes the end all, be all of community life and existence. Individualism becomes the condition of social life. Individual experience matters more, and, as Arnett and Holba (2012) write, "Individualism emerges from a desire to stand above human history and not to be socially connected to other people" (p. 198). Under this perspective, individuals who are sovereign are not bound to anyone or anything. If it is best for the individual, the thinking goes, then that is all that matters.

In order to act upon the impulses of individualism, then an individual must have autonomy, the ability to act independently. The right to vote rests upon the notion of individual autonomy. When presented with a choice of candidates, an individual must be able to act freely to decide which candidate to support with a vote. In this sense, individual autonomy ties itself to democratic ideals. In the same way, the ideal form of commerce and/or capitalism rests upon notions of individual autonomy. Under this economic system, an individual should possess the freedom to work where they would like to work, invest money where they want to invest, and spend money where they want to spend money. Certainly, there can be restraints on where and how one works, invests, and spends, but the notion of an individual possessing the autonomy to

make these choices operates as a through line to what makes the economic system work for better or worse. Again, in these types of choices an individual can make, we find the remnants of radical Enlightenment. An individual should be able to cast a ballot without fear of reprisal from governmental and religious institutions. An individual should be able to make economic affiliations without trying to gain favor with a monarch. However, the success of giving individuals this freedom broke the ties to community that kept the preeminence of individualism at bay.

The Loss of Community

The individual exists in a dialectic with the community, or, to put it more simply, there is a relationship between individual and community. Arnett and Holba (2012) explain, "The passions of the individual temper the community, and the community tempers the passions of the individual"; Arnett and Holba (2012) call this a "dialectic of difference" (p. 196). In this sense, the individual and the community shape and influence one another simultaneously. The individual can work to temper the passions of the community by placing limits on what the community can do. The community can place limits on the individual limiting in ways to temper the individual passions. We can see this interplay between the individual and the community through systems of rights and laws. A community can grant an individual rights. The right to vote and the right to freedom of expression/speech are two examples. Through the ballot and through speech, the individual can shape the outcomes of the community. At the same time, the community can create laws that prohibit what the individual can do. For example, there are laws that offer limits to voting and limits to freedom of expression. However, the individual is not without redress, because the individual can speak and vote to change the system of laws. As Arnett and Holba (2012) note, the individual and the community are both differentiated and

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connected in this dialectic (p. 196). In this dialectic, the community should not consume the individual entirely, and the individual should not separate entirely from the community. If the community consumes the individual, then there is no individual. If the individuals separate entirely from the community, then there is no community. Both the community and the individual need one another.

Again, in order to exercise the vote and in order to exercise freedom of speech/expression, the individual must have autonomy, but individual autonomy became an end unto itself. Votes untethered to a royal obligation and speech untethered to the demands of a monarch produced a belief that absolute autonomy should exist in all areas of human life, a life without regard to what the community—and other community members—might want or need. Individual autonomy became a radical pursuit of one's own self-interest, forsaking all others in the community. To meet desires for self-interest, one should not be tied to the traditions and institutions of the community. In this sense, the community loses its rhetorical pull because it cannot offer the material gains that individual wealth and happiness can offer. This is what de Tocqueville considered the "dark side" of individual autonomy and freedom (Arnett & Holba, 2012, p. 201). Liberation in terms of vote and speech are good, but at the same time people have a passion to pursue their own self-interest and material goods. De Tocqueville discovered that in early America the passion for materialism held more and more sway, and the dark side of freedom and autonomy grew. The pursuit of material goods and pleasure meant "that one does not think or reflect on action and implications; instead, one succumbs to this desire in an unprincipled manner that privileges the unreflective individual self-interest over the community" (Arnett & Holba, 2012, p. 201). Put simply, the dialectic between individual and community can no longer keep individualism from becoming tyrannical. The dark side of freedom emerges, and

the community becomes less and less important. The community also becomes less and less effective in stopping the individual. There is a multiplier effect as the dialectic between individual and community dies.

Media and Individual Autonomy

Because the rise of individualism and the inherent belief in the goodness of individual autonomy rose with the moderate Enlightenment and early America, one might conclude that the rise of individualism and belief in individual autonomy came from philosophy, politics, or sociocultural conditions. Certainly, philosophy of communication concerns itself with individual autonomy because interlocutors carry the belief in individual autonomy into our conversations and communicative practices. Because philosophy of communication operates as philosophy, the role of philosophy of communication would be to chart the rise of individual autonomy philosophically. This is how the philosophy of communication can label individualism as a "misstep" (Arnett & Holba, 2012, p. 195). Individualism became problematic as individual autonomy gave into the dark side of freedom. However, a potential shortfall of the philosophy of communication might lie in its lack of attention to the role of media writ large. Consequently, if we acknowledge media ecology as a philosophy of communication, then we can explore the ways in which communication technology and media—both of which are inevitable in communication—exacerbate or limit individualistic impulses. Philosophy of communication and postmodern thinkers can expose the lie of individualism, but media ecology can help us to consider the ways media environments build and maintain that lie. As Strate (2017b) contends, scholars working from the tradition of media ecology "generally view media as playing a leading role in forming the structure of society" (p. 22). While it is not the purpose of this project to say whether the media ecology is the best and only approach to understanding the rise of

individualism and individual autonomy, it is important to remember media ecology can account for the technological apparati left out by philosophers, political scientists, sociologists, and communication scholars working from other traditions, the communication traditions outlined by Craig (1999). In addition, since this project extends Neil Postman's media ecology, it makes sense to take up the question posed earlier: how do media environments support the growth and development of individual autonomy?

As mentioned in Chapter 4 of this project, in *Amusing Ourselves to Death* (1985), Postman argued that early Americans were among the most literate societies in the world at that time. The American project grew out of the print medium. Postman extends this argument in *Building a Bridge to the 18th Century: How the Past Can Improve Our Future* (1999). Also citing Alexis de Tocqueville's *Democracy in America*, Postman discusses the ways in which the printed word influenced communication patterns. De Tocqueville found that American spoke as if they were constructing a thesis, and Postman (1999) wrote, "This odd practice is less a reflection of an American's obstinacy than of his modeling his conversational style on the structure of the printed word" (p. 144). Those individuals who gave into the impulses of individual self-interest and materialism spoke in a manner consistent with the printed word. The printed word worked to dissociate the idea from the emotions supporting the idea (Postman, 1985, p. 58). Because of the primacy of the printed word, public discourse became analytical, "stately", and "impersonal" (Postman, 1999, p. 144). From a media ecology perspective, the dialectic of individual and community that worked to hold off the forces of a tyrannical individualism began to fray during a moment when print informed communicative practices.

For most of this project, I have taken up Postman's cause in lauding the print ecosystem. In Chapter 4, I argued that the print ecosystem offers traditions worth keeping. In Chapter 5, I

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argued that the print medium offers us the ability to return to a sense of place. However, Postman (1992) notes, "Every technology is both a burden and a blessing; not either-or, but this-and-that" (pp. 4-5). There must be a dark side to print as well, and we can begin to suss out this dark side through an examination of the social and psychological consequences of print. Yes, the printed word works well for solidifying and testing ideas, but what else does the printed word do? Media ecology scholars were able to identify the impact of the printed word by tracing the shift from an oral world to a print world, the shift from the primary sense organ of the ear to the primary sense organ of the eye. This realm of media ecology scholarship is known as orality-literary studies (Strate, 2006, p. 39).

Orality and literacy studies remain central to the tradition of media ecology (Strate, 2006; Cali, 2017; Gronbeck, 2006). Cali (2017) writes, "This area [orality-literacy studies] of media ecology study forms the foundation of the entire field" (p. 107). While I do not want to suggest that there was a single cause or reason for orality-literacy studies centrality to media ecology, orality-literacy studies proves foundational to media ecology for a number of reasons. First, there were a number of scholarly connections between classical scholars who studied orality in Greek poetry, such as Eric Havelock, and those who were interested in the impact of communication technology, such as Harold Innis and Marshall McLuhan (see Strate, 2006, p. 39; Havelock, 1986, pp. 7-17; Gronbeck, 2006, p. 338). The interest in Greek orality sparked an interest for the foundational scholars in the field, and McLuhan and others integrated the work from orality-literacy studies into what became media ecology. Second, Gronbeck (2006) describes a "fertile period" of orality-literacy studies across a number of disciplines that occurred in 1962-63 (p. 338). This period of time corresponded with Neil Postman's introduction to Marshall McLuhan, and preceded the development of the Media Ecology Ph.D. program at New York University. As

such, when Postman (1970) committed the idea of media ecology to print, he referred to several scholars who were already engaging in orality-literacy studies (p. 161). Third, oral communication and written communication are "modes and modalities of communication" (Cali, 2017, p. 107). As modes of communication, they invite investigation at an environmental level. The shift from oral to written communication allowed scholars working from the media ecology tradition to contemplate the shift in consciousness that occurred with the shift in the modes of communication. While both McLuhan and Postman advocated thinking about the future of media, and "futurology" remains part of the media ecology tradition (Strate, 2017b, p. 29), the shift from oral to literate culture could be historically documented and justifies examining media and modes of communication at an environmental level.

The Printed Word and Individual Autonomy

Despite the centrality of orality-literacy studies to media ecology, I will not try to summarize the corpus of research on orality and literacy. Gronbeck (2006) notes orality-literacy studies owe a debt to "[c]lassics, anthropology, cultural history, and evolutionary biology" (p. 335), and orality-literacy studies spread beyond those to fields other than media ecology, including literary, hermeneutical, and rhetorical theory (p. 338). Consequently, I will focus on what orality-literacy studies can tell us about the rise of individualism and the belief in the goodness of individual autonomy.

First, significant to this project on loving resistance, in *The Muse Learns to Write*, Eric Havelock (1986) focuses on how different environments of communication produce different consciousness of thought. In particular, Havelock (1986) wanted to explore the shift in consciousness that occurred "when Greek orality transformed itself into Greek literacy" (p 1). Literacy and the alphabet shifted the means of communication, but also the Greek sense of

consciousness (Havelock, 1986, p. 17). The shift of communication/consciousness explains why the Greeks were able to produce literature, alter conceptions of grammar and vocabulary, and develop philosophy (Havelock, 1986, p. 23). Moreover, the case of the Greek shift from orality to literacy helps to explain or illuminate many of the problems and developments that occurred when the means of communication began to shift. Havelock's work illustrates that the shift from oral to literate was ultimately an environmental shift. Havelock's work also illustrates that the environmental shift produces for us evidence that one should not ignore the impact of communication media on patterns of thinking. If we are to chart the rise of individualism and individual autonomy, then we must give notice to the media environment that developed in conjunction with that rise. Media ecology leverages our understanding of the America that de Tocqueville investigated. Early American democracy was a literate world. It was a world in which orators were, in many ways, writers.

Second, literacy and writing shifted consciousness in such a manner that gave rise to the notion of autonomy. Consequently, the shift to literacy and writing illustrates how the dialectic between community and individual could fray or shift in emphasis. Walter Ong (2002) contends the shift from orality to literacy allowed for human thought to not just be the outcome of "natural powers"; instead, writing produces consciousness beyond what the brain and mind can produce on its own (p. 77). The technology of writing, obviously, influences the way we write, but writing also influences the way in which we speak; Ong (2002), argues, "Without writing, the literate mind would not and could not think as it does, not only when it engages in writing but normally even when composing its thoughts in oral form" (p. 77). Writing shifted consciousness "[m]ore than any other single invention" (Ong, 2002, p. 77). While the invention of writing appeared long before the early American democracy de Tocqueville examined, he witnessed a

culture unique and foreign to his previously experienced or witnesses. Given the history of literacy in the colonies (Postman, 1985), there existed a unique formation of a culture based on print. If de Tocqueville's study of American democracy operates as a seer stone in understanding the rise of individualism (Arnett & Holba, 2012), then we must remember that the United States was the first nation that grew from print culture and writing. Marshall McLuhan could see the residues of this unique culture two centuries later, and the residues were so significant that he felt it necessary to devote his scholarly attention to media (Marchand, 1989). Importantly, writing separated language from communicator. Prior to the invention of writing, speech tied language to communicator, and language could not separate itself from the communicators who spoke it. Writing created a shift. Ong (2002) writes, "Writing establishes what has been called 'context free language [...] or 'autonomous' discourse [...], discourse which cannot be directly questioned or contested as oral speech because written discourse has been detached from its author" (p. 77). Writing allows for the detached style of speaking. Thought and language detached from the communicator allows one to treat all thoughts the same, and much of logic analysis, rhetorical criticism, and literary criticism seek to hold language to some standard or apply some method to language. If we consider the environmental consequences of media, we can identify some of the reasons why de Tocqueville saw an American society with a "hyper-focus of sameness of me and the other" that led to the rise of individualism (Arnett & Holba, 2012, p. 201). Writing produced autonomous communication, and also it made autonomy a possibility as we will see a continuation of this idea in the next point.

Third, in his historiography of media epochs, *The Gutenberg Galaxy* (1962), Marshall McLuhan argues that understanding cultural change requires understanding the shift in communication media (p. 42). The phonetic alphabet in conjunction with the invention of the

printing press developed a sense of fragmentation and separation. The written word—and later

the printed word—separated the individual from the community. McLuhan even contends that

the cultural condition of anomie articulated by Emile Durkheim could only happen after the

fragmentation precipitated by the phonetic alphabet (1962, pp. 42-43). Continuing this theme,

McLuhan (1962) writes, "The detribalizing of the individual has, in the past at least, depended on

an intense visual life fostered by literacy, and by literacy of the alphabetic kind alone" (p. 43).

Again, we can see how media ecology adds meaning to the philosophy of communication. If

individualism is a misstep that separates the individual from the community valuing all moves

toward individual autonomy, then the philosophy of communication should acknowledge the role

that literacy played in creating this misstep. Although I am reticent to utilize the word tribe, we

can think of a tribe as a community. If the alphabet, literacy, and the printed word detribalizes us,

then it means we are being pulled from a community. If there is fragmentation occurring, then

individuals are being fragmented by the community. The dialectic between community and

individual in which each tempers one another must take into account the ways in which the

written word and print might inform that dialectic, or from a media ecology perspective, the

dialectic between community and individual exists within the ecosystem of the dominant media.

In oral world it becomes difficult for the individual to separate from the community, and at the

same time, the community has complete control over the individual. In a literate world,

individuals can think of themselves as separate from the community because print allows for

separate thoughts, and these separate thoughts can now be exteriorized, made public. This allows

one to speak about their self-interest, and it allows one to defend a thesis. The presence of

rhetoric in a literate Greek culture indicated that individuals could think and act in self-interest.

For example, one might utilize epideictic rhetoric to improve their social standing. The early

American democracy, however, existed in a different media environment. The speed of the printing press and the depths of its influence on early American democracy (Postman, 1985) allowed for a greater degree of separation of the individual from the community. The printing press of early American democracy contributed to a different dialectic than other literate cultures. I would also add that America successfully shed itself from the British Crown, and it did not have a government that developed over centuries. The combination of loosening older political formations and the rise of the printing press allowed the dark side of individual autonomy to emerge in early American democracy.

Fourth, we must also remember that the printing press allowed for portable forms of media. Gronbeck (2006) works to summarize orality-literacy studies through the construction of theorems about shifts from orality to literacy. Gronbeck argues that some aspects—or one theorem—of orality-literacy studies follow the trope of technological determinism (2006, pp. 340-1). It is not my position to say that this interpretation is correct, but the notion of the outcomes of portable media adds value to our understanding of the rise of individualism and individual autonomy. Gronbeck contends that orality-literacy studies and its focus on portable media paint a unique picture of life under the new regime of portable media. He writes, "Portable media allowed constitutions, laws, and rules-of-life to circulate far from the center of authority; as well, they were flexible, regularly changed, especially once printing permitted the easy re-issuing of laws and rules" (2006, p. 341). The portable nature of media extended the fragmentation created by the phonetic alphabet. Authority becomes decentralized and changeable. Authority no longer has the fixity that it once had. As centers of authority lose their rhetorical pull and power to influence the lives of individuals, there exists a concomitant rise in the need for the individual to navigate the new set of circumstances, creating a need for

autonomy. An autonomous individual could adapt to the changing set of laws and rules fostered by portable media, or an autonomous individual could advocate for changes to laws and rules through portable media. Portable media allows a person to become walking and talking dissertations. New situations create the need to create new arguments, and the new arguments must meet the standards of print. Not all arguments meet the high standards of print, but individuals must have the freedom to try and test their ideas. This gives rise to a maximalist belief that individuals should be free to develop those ideas. It would be a mistake to conclude that early American democracy functioned as a period in which communication was unfettered and unrestricted, but Tedford and Herbeck (2017) conclude, "The adoption of the Constitution and the Bill or Rights marked a high point in the centuries of struggle for democracy and civil liberties" (p. 23). This high point for civil liberties fostered, in part, by portable media contained the seeds for the dark side of freedom to emerge. It would allow individual autonomy to become more important than the democracy individual autonomy would supposedly facilitate.

Loving Resistance and Individual Autonomy

Again, Postman's articulation of loving resistance forms the impetus for this particular project, and Postman viewed print as the appropriate medium to counterbalance the biases of electronic media (Gencarelli, 2006, p. 247). This creates a special problem for loving resistance. I argue that loving resistance not only helps us to navigate technopoly but that it also offers a path to push against the secular trinity of progress, efficiency, and individual autonomy that supports the tyranny or misstep of individualism. The problem is that progress, efficiency, and individual autonomy have roots in the move from an oral culture to a written culture. This leads to the question: how can Postman and the loving resistance fighters I described, who value print,

help us to work against technopoly and modernity when modernity arose in the environment of print and literacy? This appears to be an inherent contradiction with loving resistance.

We should keep the following in mind. First, we find ourselves in the midst of technopoly and the electronic age—and possibly, now, the digital age). This unique set of circumstances requires a unique response. Recall Postman's articulation of the thermostatic view in *Teaching as Conserving Activity* (1979). The thermostatic view presumes that education should offer a counter argument to what the culture is doing. If the culture focuses on electronic and digital communication, then education, and communication education, should offer a counter argument. This project argues the best elements of print, through loving resistance, offer a counter to the excesses of the electronic age. Second, electronic and digital media have not remedied the problems created by print media. As I have charted in this particular project, the preeminence of digital media have only exacerbated the obsession with progress, efficiency, and individual autonomy. Whether we call the current age a technopoly, the shallows (Carr, 2010), a period of digiphrenia and present shock (Rushkoff, 2013), or an age of anxiety (Wachs & Schaff, 2020), our current media environment has done little to slow our current problems. Third, technological utopians see hope in the digital environment and believe that we can build a digital humanities in cyberspace that reinvigorates narratives (Murray, 1997). However, scant evidence that digital humanities can build the narratives necessary to pull us out of the problems created by the digital environment exists. Much of Rushkoff's (2013) argument focuses on the collapse of narratives as a continuing theme in the digital environment. All of this leads to the conclusion that while print culture is responsible for our current dilemma there are few resources offered by the digital environment and the print ecosystem can offer a counter argument to our current dilemma of technopoly.

Print media offers the resources which can return us to the notion of collective thinking. I do not mean that we can "turn back the clock" to the print media and print culture, but as the faith in individual autonomy rises, we can look to those loving resistance fighters who were able to utilize the print environment to push against the notion of individual autonomy. Print can be used to restore faith in the dialectic between individual and community. Print can help us to rethink our fascination with individualism and preference for individual autonomy. In the next two sections, I will discuss how Myles Horton utilized print to move away from individualism and toward community and collective action.

Myles Horton: A Loving Resistance Fighter

In this section, I will describe how Myles Horton engages in the act of loving resistance. Media ecology scholarship, although concerned with education, has not engaged in specific analysis or application of Horton's educational philosophy. Consequently, I offer a biographical sketch of Horton and the Highlander Folk School. After offering this sketch, I will describe how Horton engages in the act of loving resistance through his commitment to the American tradition, human connection, religious narratives, and common sense. I will close this section with a discussion of Horton's distanced relationship with technology and how he avoids the nefarious types of invisible technologies described by Postman.

Biography of Myles Horton

Born on July 9, 1905 in Savannah, Tennessee, Myles Horton was the son of Perry and Elsie Falls Horton, who were both, at one time, school teachers—even though neither had a college education, they were allowed to teach because they both had more schooling than their students (Horton, 1998, p. 1). At an early age, Horton developed two beliefs that impacted him for the rest of his life. First, he learned and developed beliefs about the differences between the

rich and the poor. His family was poor; his parents could not remain as school teachers and held various jobs that were transient in nature (Horton, 1998, p. 1). In particular, his grandfather, a "mountain man" who Horton described as practically illiterate but quite intelligent, taught him about the advantages that rich people had and what rich people could do versus what poor people had and could do (Horton, 1998, pp. 1-2). Horton (1998) claimed, "He had a very clear idea of rich and poor: the rich were people who lived off of somebody else. The people he knew who worked and lived on their own were mostly poor" (p. 2). When Horton began to work as a clerk as a teenager, the difference in wages between the workers and unequal wealth between workers and ownership disturbed him. Horton (1998) stated, "My first feeling about it was that it was very unjust for somebody to have to work so hard and get so little, and for somebody else to have so much" (p. 2). Second, he learned from his parents the importance of devoting your life to serving others and education; "They taught me by their actions that you are supposed to serve your fellow men, you're supposed to do something worthwhile with your life, and education is meant to help you do something for others" (Horton, 1998, pp. 2-3). In essence, Horton learned about inequality/injustice and the importance of working with others and education to overcome inequalities and injustices.

In addition, growing up Horton picked up habits of thought and action that grew out of his realization of being poor. Horton developed a sense of care for other people because of the injustices in the system. Although his parents had a transient working life, they were always working or searching for work, and watching his parents work to try to improve their lot with little success made Horton realize that a system produced this situation (Horton & Freire, 1990, p. 17). Unlike his grandfather who viewed the world as a static dichotomy between rich and poor, Horton believed that the injustice and inequalities were "the fault of something else"

(Horton & Freire, 1990, p. 17). Although he retroactively applied systems thinking to his parents' situation, he began to recognize that forces beyond individual action helped to determine an individual situation. The system was unfair, so he had to care for other people. Horton began to turn away from his own interests and turned toward others. Horton believed that understanding that the blame lies within the system helped him to avoid a sense of self-pity, and he was able to focus on other people. He stated, "I was resentful of the situation that caused this. So I think I kind of liberated myself [...] Since I didn't have to waste any of my sympathy for myself, I had a lot more sympathy for other people" (Horton & Freire, 1990, p. 18). While we might take the idea of sympathy literally as pity for others, Horton's understanding of sympathy operated in a much larger sense. Horton felt that every person every person had immanent value, and you have to build a societal system that does not leave behind anyone (Horton, 1998, p. 7).

Through environment created by his parents and belief in the value of education, Horton became a voracious reader, and this habit would also profoundly impact the rest of his life. Horton learned to read before he began his schooling because "we had books in the family" (Horton & Freire, 1990, p. 18). Horton had an extended family who were better off than his immediate family, and this family had a large book collection. Horton would read every book on the bookshelves, without discernment. Horton recalls, "I read dictionaries. I read encyclopedias. I read dirty stories, and I read pornography, and I read religious tracts. I read whatever was next on the shelf. And I just read everything" (Horton & Freire, 1990, p. 19). Later, Horton became "known as the town reader" (Horton, 1998, p. 11), and Horton stated, "I was always getting in trouble for reading in school" (Horton & Freire, 1990, p. 20). Eventually, this habit of reading informed Horton's approach to the world. Reading brought a sense of meaning to the world, and

reading shaped Horton's viewpoint (Horton & Freire, 1990, pp. 30-31). Horton developed his

sense of thinking through literacy and through the offerings of print culture.

Horton's family were members of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church, a far more staid

congregation compared to the evangelicals and Baptists present in the region (Horton, 1998, p.

5). Members of this church's congregation encouraged Horton to attend Cumberland University

in Lebanon, Tennessee, and Horton enrolled in 1924 (Horton, 1998, p. 13). A football player in

high school, Horton also played football for Cumberland, but he eventually left the football team

"because it was interfering with" his reading (Horton, 1998, p. 14). Horton felt that the teachers

at Cumberland were mediocre, but he learned because the university had an outstanding library

and because he continued with his obsession with reading everything he could find (Horton,

1998, pp. 13-14). Horton describes his experience at Cumberland, "Four years of reading!", and

this experience helped him to cultivate the ideas about education that he developed later in life

(1998, p. 14). Horton viewed college not as a moment to advance his own social standing but

instead viewed it as a moment to immerse himself in reading and learning.

Aside from spending time reading at Cumberland, Horton's experiences during summers

informed his orientation toward education and helping others. In the summer, the Cumberland

Presybterian Church hired Horton to run Sunday Schools and Vacation Bible Schools for folks

living in the Cumberland Mountain region of Appalachia (Jacobs, 2003, p. xvii). In his final

summer in the Cumberland Mountains, Horton began to meet people in Ozone, Tennessee, and

at these meetings the people began to discuss the secular problems they experienced—the South

began to feel the impacts of the Great Depression before the market crash of 1929 (Jacobs, 2003,

p. xvii). The people at Ozone thought that Horton, because of his college education, would have

answers for them, but he did not have the answers (Horton, 1998, p. 23). Horton suggested that

the people at Ozone try something his family did when they experienced a problem beyond their control; his family would get together with other families and discuss the problem (Horton, 1998, p. 23). Through talking, the families would build ideas and knowledge together (Horton, 1998, p. 23). Given the centrality of this moment—encouraging the folks at Ozone to talk through problems together—to Horton's life as an educator, I feel compelled to quote him at length:

> Before the meeting was over I had made a very valuable discovery. You don't have to know the answers. The answers come from the people, and when they don't have any answers, then you have another role, and you find resources [...] So I became a resource person and started setting up follow-up meetings. (Horton, 1998, p. 23).

Horton discovered education need not be centered on the expertise of the teacher. Instead, the people themselves could be experts and identify their own problems and answers. The moment became so impactful to Horton that he began to connect everything he read to what he discovered in Ozone (Horton, 1998, p. 24). In addition, the Ozone experiences taught Horton that he did not know enough, and if Horton truly wanted to help people, he would need to continue his reading and education (Adams, 1975, p. 10).

After Horton graduated from Cumberland University in 1928, he became a student secretary for the YMCA of Tennessee (Adams, 1975, p. 9). During his time at the YMCA, Horton tried to integrate meetings (Adams, 1975, p. 9; Horton, 1998, pp. 16-18). He hoped to find and start an educational program that put people in the center, like the one at Ozone, but his experiences did not lead him to find one (Adams, 1975, p. 9). At this time, Horton discovered educational philosophy and American pragmatism, and he began to read the works of William James and John Dewey (Adams, 1975, p. 9). Eventually, Horton's attempts to integrate the YMCA ran afoul of the YMCA leadership, and because he also failed to discover a space for an

educational program similar to Ozone, Horton resigned from the YMCA (Adams, 1975, p. 10).

At the encouragement of a Congregationalist minister he met in Cumberland County, Tennessee,

Horton applied to and was accepted at Union Theological Seminary in New York (Adams, 1975,

p. 10). Horton (1998) wrote, "I went to Union Theological Seminary in the fall of 1929 to try to

find out how to get social justice and love together" (p. 32). Horton had hoped that the YMCA,

through its commitment to Christian love, would help him discover the connections, but he

needed to learn more.

His time at Union Theological Seminary became another important moment in Horton's

life. At Union, he met and took classes from theologian Reinhold Niebuhr (Horton, 1998, p. 34).

Niebuhr's teachings and writings blended the precepts of Christian love and social justice, so

Niebuhr's works appealed to Horton immediately. In Niebuhr, Horton found an intellectual

mentor and someone who would play an instrumental role in founding the Highlander Folk

School (Jacobs, 2003, p. xviii). Moreover, Horton began to read the works of Karl Marx, V.I.

Lenin, and he discovered works on adult education and the history of Danish Folk Schools

(Jacobs, 2003, p. xviii). Union planted the seeds of many of the ideas that informed Horton's

development of the Highlander Folk Schools, his approach to teaching, and his orientation

toward adult education. All of this occurred at the start of the Great Depression. Dale Jacobs

(2003), who conducted extensive archival research on Horton, wrote, "The potent mix of

socialist, theological, pragmatic, and educational ideas at Union percolated in Horton throughout

the 1929-30 academic year" (pp. xviii-xix). Horton (1998) discovered that he had to "move away

from individualism" (p. 43), work from the bottom up (p. 44), and take a pragmatic approach to

education based on experiences (p. 45). Union gave Horton the intellectual backing to connect

what he learned from his parents about the value of education and service to the desire to help

those left behind by the system; the time at Union gave shape to experiences Horton had at Ozone.

After his time at Union, Horton began graduate studies in sociology at the University of Chicago (Horton, 1998, p. 46). In Chicago, Horton met social worker and social activist, Jane Addams, who was running a "settlement house for recent immigrants" (1998, p. 47). Addams listened to Horton's ideas, and encouraged him to build upon what he learned at Ozone and start something akin to a settlement house in the rural South (Adams, 1975, p. 19). Addams's practical experiences of running a settlement house influenced Horton as Horton learned about the day-to-day struggles of working with those left behind by the system (Adams, 1975, p. 19). Despite the positive experiences in Chicago, Horton did not feel like his graduate education in sociology would help him to build on the Ozone project in a tangible and specific way.

Of the books Horton encountered at Cumberland University, Union Theological Seminary, and the University of Chicago, one book in particular provoked Horton's next move, Joseph K. Hart's (1927), *Light from the North: Danish Folk Schools and Their Meaning for America*. Through this reading, Horton learned about Denmark's Bishop Nikolai S.F. Gundtvig and the Danish Folk Schools of the nineteenth century. Grundtvig's adult education program worked to "enlighten and enliven the Danish peasantry after centuries of exploitation under a feudalistic system" (Glen, 1988, p. 4). Horton felt that the Danish Folk School could help him complete his vision of Ozone because the schools focused on helping adults left behind by the system to gain a sense of identity and contend with the problems they experienced. In Chicago, Horton attended dances at a Danish Lutheran church, and there he met Danish ministers who helped Horton make connections in Denmark (Horton, 1998, pp 50-51). Consequently, Horton left his graduate program at the University of Chicago, and with Reinhold Niebuhr's blessing,

Horton moved to Denmark to visit and study the Folk Schools (Adams, 1975, p. 20). In

Denmark, Horton spoke with some of the older Folk School leaders who had experiences in the

Folk Schools set up by Bishop Grundtvig (Horton, 1998, p. 51). At those schools, Horton (1998)

claimed, "The people would find their identity not within themselves but in relationship with

others" (pp. 51-52). Finding identity in relationship with others led to a "cooperative movement"

in Denmark that led to the drafting of a new constitution (Horton, 1998, p. 53). Horton's

experiences in Denmark helped Horton to make the connections between education and social

change. The Danish Folk Schools demonstrated how education could operate as a vehicle for

social change if the people in the schools could see themselves in relationship with other people,

not as separate and individual entities.

The above experiences put Myles Horton on the path to developing the Highlander Folk

School. Horton learned and believed that injustices and inequalities grew out of systemic

problems, not personal failings. Horton valued reading and learning. Horton learned that the

tenets of Christian love were made incompatible with social justice because of social institutions,

but love and justice could be reconciled. Horton learned that education from the bottom-up could

help people to solve their problems and create social change, if people realized that they were in

community with other people. All of these experiences led to the development and founding of

the Highlander Folk School in 1932.

Highlander Folk School

In the spring of 1932, Horton made his way from Denmark back to the United States

(Glen, 1988, p. 15). Given his experiences growing up in Tennessee and working with people

from Appalachia at Ozone, Horton knew he wanted to establish a Folk School in the rural,

mountainous parts of southern Appalachia, since that region experienced poverty to a greater

extent than other parts of the country (Horton, 1998, p. 60). Horton returned to his mentor at Union, Reinhold Niebuhr, and asked Niebuhr to help him obtain funding for a Folk School in North Carolina tentatively named, Southern Mountains School (Glen, 1988, p. 15). Niebuhr sent a fundraising letter to people and groups within his intellectual circle to help the school get off the ground (Horton, 1998, pp. 60-62). Horton and his cohort of supporters found a partner, Dr. Lillian Johnson, who had run a cooperative on her farm near Monteagle, Tennessee, so they decided to locate the school on Dr. Johnson's land, not in North Carolina (Horton, 1998, p. 63). A supporter recommended that Horton get in touch with another southerner who studied Danish Folk School, Don West, and West (or his wife Connie) suggested the name Highlander because scholarly researchers at the time referred to southern mountain folk as southern highlanders (Horton, 1998, p. 63). Monteagle is located in Grundy County, Tennessee, and the county "had known poverty, disease, and illiteracy for many years. The coal and lumber industries, on which the county had based its prosperity, had collapsed well before the Great Depression, leaving only devastated resources and exhausted cropland" (Glen, 1988, p. 17). Given these conditions and the fact that the county lacked adult education programs, Grundy County appeared as an appropriate location for Horton and Highlander (Glen, 1988, p. 18). Highlander Folk officially opened on November 1, 1932 with Horton and West serving as the Co-Directors of the school (Glen, 1988, p. 17).

It is beyond the scope of this project to give a full and complete history of the Highlander Folk School, but I want to point out the significance of the school to the labor movement in the South and the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 1960s as a way to give context to Horton and Highlander's achievements as well as Horton's educational philosophy and its relation to loving resistance. Highlander Folk School's most significant accomplishments took place

between 1932 and 1962 as it worked with members of the labor movement and the Civil Rights Movement. For the first five years of the Highlander, the school had little direction and few significant accomplishments (Glen, 1988, p. 21). Horton and members of the Highlander staff did become involved in mine strikes during those first five years, and Horton's involvement and ability to teach gained the notice of members of the newly formed Committee for Industrial Organization (CIO) (Jacobs, 2003, p. xxii). The CIO asked members of Highlander to help build and sustain a union membership drive in the South (Glen 1988, pp. 46-47). Beyond the push for union membership, the CIO began sending union members to Highlander for training, and as a result, Highlander "was increasingly seen as the unofficial education center for the CIO" (Jacobs, 2003, p. xxiii). In those training sessions, the union member students worked together to come up with solutions to their problems, and they learned how to recruit, strike, negotiate contracts, and also how to contend with larger social issues (Jacobs, 2003, p. xxiii). Eventually, a rift between the CIO and Highlander developed in the early 1950s when the union pushed for a more specific training set by CIO leaders, not student-led discussions (Jacobs, 2003, p. xxiii). The relationship between Highlander and the CIO ended in 1953 (Jacobs, 2003, p. xxiii).

Although Horton remained committed to civil rights and integration and although Highlander welcomed black students and union members, the school only had spurious connections with rural black southerners (Jacobs, 2003, p. xxiv). However, two events led to the school's connections to the Civil Rights Movement. First, as Highlander broke from the mostly white industrial unions from the CIO, the staff sought to strengthen connections to farm unions that had more black members (Jacobs, 2003, p. xxiv). This helped to build a level of trust between Highlander and the black community. Second, in 1953, Horton and Highlander anticipated that the Supreme Court would rule in favor of desegregation in the 1954 *Brown v.*

The Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas case, and Highlander began to host workshops to prepare for school desegregation (Jacobs, 2003, p. xxiv). Two people who would eventually become central to the Civil Rights Movement, Esau Jenkins and Septima Clark of Johns Island, South Carolina, attended a Highlander workshop held in 1954 (Jacobs, 2003, p. xxv). Jenkins wanted to create programs to help black citizens pass literacy tests in the South, allowing black citizens of Johns Island access to the ballot (Jacobs, 2003, p. xxv). These literacy programs proved to be successful and spread beyond Johns Island to other parts of the South and became known as Citizenship Schools (Jacobs, 2003, p. xxv). Highlander never directed the program, but offered support for the program by offering Clark and another Citizenship School teacher, Bernice Robinson, positions on the Highlander staff (Jacobs, 2003, p. xxv; Horton, 1998). Eventually, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference took over the Citizenship School program wholesale in 1961, but the idea began with students in the environment set up at Highlander (Horton, 1998, p. 107). Rosa Parks attended workshops at Highlander in 1955, before the Montgomery Bus Boycott (Horton, 1998, p. 98). In 1957, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. delivered a speech at Highlander's twenty-fifth anniversary; Parks and Ralph Abernathy also attended this event (Horton, 1998, pp. 118-119). Because of their association with unions and the Civil Rights Movements, detractors labeled Highlander as a "Communist Training School", and a billboard meant to disparage King showed a picture of King attending a seminar at Highlander with the label of Highlander as a "Communist Training School" (Horton, 1998, p. 121).

By 1960, Highlander's success attracted unwanted attention from those who sought to undermine the school's involvement in the Civil Rights Movement (Glen, 1988). Through a court case and other legal proceedings, the State of Tennessee revoked Highlander's charter in 1961, and the school's assets and property in Monteagle were sold in 1962 (Glen, 1988, p. 207-

208). Highlander's project continued in Knoxville, Tennessee as the Highlander Research and Education Center (Glen, 1988, p. 210). In 1972, Horton retired as the director, and Highlander moved to New Market, Tennessee (Glen, 1988, p. 218). Highlander Research and Education Center continues to operate to this day, but it has not maintained the cultural impact that it had during the period of time under Horton's leadership. Glen (1988) writes, "Indeed, the history of the Highlander Folk School is in many ways the history of dissent and reform in Appalachia and the American South since the onset of the Great Depression" (p. 220). Not to disparage the current happenings at Highlander, but as the labor movement and Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s waned, so did the impact and influence of Highlander.

Horton Post-Highlander

Although Horton and Highlander became involved in two social movements, Horton always thought of himself as an educator, first and foremost (Horton, 1998; Horton & Freire, 1990). Although Horton left as director in 1972, his affiliation with Highlander continued until his death in 1990 (Bell, Gaventa, & Peters, 1990). In his later years, Horton traveled throughout the world sharing his educational philosophy (Horton, 1998; Bell, Gaventa, & Peters, 1990). Specifically, Horton thought about how the educational practices at Highlander could have saliency in other poor communities and undeveloped countries, and he tried to share his ideas with others (Horton, 1998, p. 213). Horton did not publish many works and did not like to deliver lectures to large audiences (Kohl & Kohl, 1998, p. xiii). Consequently much of Horton's educational philosophy remains an inchoate pedagogy (Jacobs, 2003). Horton's educational philosophy does not have a specific outline, nor does it have tenets, but Jacobs (2003) offers a construction of this pedagogy through archival research. Horton's 1998 autobiography *The Long Haul* offers insights to his pedagogy as well. Finally, his 1990 "speaking book", *We Make the*

Road By Walking, is a dialogue with Paolo Freire, author of *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970).

His book with Freire also gives insights to Horton's thinking about education. These three texts

will help to shed light as to how Horton's thinking will offer narrative grounding for loving

resistance to individual autonomy that I will explore in the next section.

Horton's Belief in America's Vitality

In offering Wendell Berry and Robert A. Caro as loving resistance fighters who creates

the narrative ground to resisting the problems brought on by technopoly, I might have given too

little attention to the *loving* aspect of the loving resistance fighter. Recall Postman's (1992)

description of the loving element of the loving resistance fighter, "By 'loving,' I mean that, [...]

you must always keep close to your heart the narratives and symbols that once made the United

States the hope of the world and that may yet have enough vitality to do so again" (p. 182). For

the loving resistance fighter, America and the American narrative and/or project are not lost

causes. The loving resistance fighter sees something within the American project that must be

saved and recovered. Certainly, Postman in both *Technopoly* and *Amusing Ourselves to Death*

(1985) documented the ways in which media and technology undermined important American

traditions. De Tocqueville's *Democracy in America* suggested that dangers existed in the

American project soon after its inception. More recent analysis from media ecology and

philosophy of communication have pointed to the decline in faith in the American project.

Rushkoff (2016) discusses how the push for growth, aided by technology, has led to a sense of

resentment. Wachs and Schaff (2020) identify how technology has polluted American discourse

in such a way that "trivial information" becomes more important in the current environment than

"meaningful social or political action" (p. 3). Despite pointing out the problems in our current

moment, Postman, de Tocqueville, Rushkoff, and Wachs and Schaff, all point to the possibility

of recovering the American project. My articulation of understanding loving resistance through a recovery of Myles Horton's educational philosophy seeks to add to this conversation. Loving resistance should not operate as some Foucauldian-like critique that requires endless questioning of structures of knowledge out of fear of making the same mistakes as the past structures. Instead, loving resistance seeks some form of recovery; there is something worth saving.

Although Horton despised the economic and racial inequalities wrought by the American political and economic systems, he valued aspects of the American system and believed that the American system had values worth fighting for, recovering, and preserving. In particular, Horton valued America's protection of freedom of speech. Horton (1998) claimed, "We have more of a tradition of freedom of speech than any other country. It's not only part of our dream, it's part of our reality. Sometimes we have to fight to protect this freedom" (p. 172). Whether or not the United States has a stronger or deeper tradition of freedom of speech than another country is immaterial. Horton (1998) believes that, despite the inequalities that he believes were created by capitalism (p. 172), the reality of the American dream and the American project requires the tradition of freedom of speech, a tradiation inherent to the country itself. Although injustices exist in America and are created by America, for Horton, America still has the traditions and resources to push against these inequalities. As Horton stated explicitly, we must fight for this freedom. One might read Horton's study of Marx as an advocacy for a revolution of the proletariat, but Horton does not advocate such a revolution. Instead, he advocates for the people to make collective decisions (Horton, 1998, p. 169), and for the people to make decisions, they must have the freedom to exercise speech.

Moreover, Horton valued freedom of speech because it allowed Highlander to survive, so Highlander, despite being derisively called a "'Communist training school'" (Glen, 1988, p. 1),

rested on the American tradition. Horton (1988) claimed, "Some antidemocratic interests have been trying to put Highlander out of business for fifty years and haven't succeeded, because of the degree of our freedom of speech. We couldn't have survived if there was none" (p. 174). Highlander grew out of what Horton learned at Ozone: if people can discuss and learn about problems together, then the people can find solutions. Horton's educational philosophy rested on the notion of free discussion of ideas to reach understanding, and he worked to create an education environment that could be "islands of decency" in relation to the larger American culture (Horton, 1998, p. 133). Consequently, the freedom of speech—a value that Horton explicitly stated as central to the American tradition—sustained Highlander internally and protected Highlander from external forces. Freedom of speech sustained the educational practices within Highlander, and freedom of speech protected those educational practices from those who viewed the practices at Highlander as radical. Fighting for freedom of speech, for Horton, meant fighting for Highlander and the works of the people at Highlander.

As mentioned earlier, Horton believed that the American economic system produced injustices and inequalities. Growing up in the American South in the early part of the twentieth century Horton was also witness to the system of segregation created in the American system, and he understood how this system of segregation was incompatible with his faith in social equality (Horton, 1998, p. 137). Despite this, Horton still believed that the American Revolution was a just cause. Even though the Revolution did not secure rights for all of the American inhabitants, Horton believed the Revolution was a fight for freedom. Horton (1988) claimed, "We in the United States know what freedom is because this country was born in a struggle for freedom" (p. 174). Postman (1992) held that a loving resistance fighter had faith in the American project "despite the confusion, errors, and stupidities" (p. 182). No doubt, Horton felt it unjust

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that America had a consistent ability to leave people behind, but despite this problem, he viewed the freedoms fought for and offered by the American system were important and central to his educational mission as Highlander. For Horton, America needed rescuing, not destruction. In regard to the American system, Horton states, "There's so much good in some things, even though there's bad, that we build on that" (Horton & Freire, 1990, p. 138). The good in American democracy should be recovered, not destroyed.

Horton's Belief in Human Connections

Recall that Postman (1992) claimed that those who act as a loving resistance fighter are those "who, when they 'reach out and touch someone,' expect that person to be in the same room" (p. 184). Although he did not label himself as a loving resistance fighter, Horton certainly acted on this impulse; he recognized the importance of having people in a space together as a way to connect and solve their collective problems. Much of this line of Horton's thinking began at Ozone, when he recognized that the people of Ozone did not need him to provide all the answers to their problems. Instead, the people could work together to solve their problems collectively. Horton's educational philosophy demands that people be in space with one another, and because the education philosophy demands that people be in space with one another, Horton's education philosophy rejects electronically mediated communication and moves toward loving resistance.

If any structure existed in the educational workshops at Highlander, it was the structure that was rooted in the notion of the "circle of learners" (Horton, 1998, p. 150). Whenever people came to a workshop, the members of the Highlander staff would create a deliberate circle of learners, no one would sit at the front or be at the head of the table (Horton, 1998, p. 150). The educators/staff members at Highlander would work "to create a relaxed atmosphere in which the

participants feel free to share their experiences. Then they are encouraged to analyze, learn from and build on these experiences" (Horton, 1998, p. 150). Donors and organizations like the CIO would attempt to bring in speakers to lecture the workshop attendees; sometimes, supporting organizations would send movies for the learners at Highlander to watch (Horton, 1998, pp. 150-151). Horton viewed these attempts as counterproductive. Instead, he wanted the session to develop naturally out of the conversation started in the circle of learners. Horton (1988) stated, "Each session had to take its own form and develop according to the students' needs" (p. 150). The circle of learners rests on the notion that people had to be together, face-to-face when communicating, not separated or in the environment dictated by technology.

Not only does Horton believe in the importance of people being in shared space, his commitment to the circle of learners illustrates, albeit implicitly, the potential problems of incorporating technology into the education setting. Certainly, Postman believed that language and print operated as forms of technology (Gencarelli, 2006). However, Postman also recognized that technology inevitably changes the entire learning environment. Postman (1992) argued, "A new technology does not add or subtract something. It changes everything" (p. 18). While Horton did not have access to the digital technology that makes conferencing possible across time and distance, he asserted the importance of having people in a room together, a tenet of loving resistance. Horton's education philosophy demanded that people come together to discuss their common problems and issues. Even without digital technology, the print medium has allowed networks to form through letter writing and publishing connections (Winckles & Rehbein, 2017). Horton's educational philosophy relied on the face to face interactions within the circle of learning. Horton (1998) noted the importance of Highlander staff members watching the participants in the circle of learners and giving attention to nonverbal communication (p. 71).

This is a recognition of how group members can share meaning beyond what a person says in the circle of learners. In addition, Postman (1992) stated, "Orality stresses group learning, cooperation, and a sense of social responsibility" (p. 17). While Postman may have been referring to the primary orality described by Ong (2002), the circle of learners gives orality a chance. Typographic (print) and electronic media informs our current sense of orality (Strate, 2017b, p. 205). Still, the circle of learning and its emphasis gives the cooperation and social responsibility a chance, and Horton's commitment to the circle of learners recognizes that technology changes the interactions of the group.

Horton's Belief in Religious Narratives

Postman (1992) also calls loving resistance fighters those "who take the narratives of religion seriously and who do not believe that science is the only system of thought capable of producing truth" (p. 184). Religious narratives figured important in Horton's life and informed his educational philosophy. As mentioned previously, Horton grew up in the Cumberland Presbyterian Church, and this church upheld beliefs in Calvinism and predestination (Horton, 1998, p. 7). Horton, ever the reader, began reading his grandparents' theology books and told his mother that he did not believe in the predestination taught in the family's church (Horton, 1998, p. 7). Horton's mother Elsie told him not to worry about predestination; instead, she stressed the importance of the Christian love and loving your neighbor (Horton, 1998, p. 7). Horton (1998) stated, "She had a very simple belief: God is love, and therefore you love your neighbors. [...] It was a good nondoctrinaire background, and it gave me a sense of right and wrong" (p. 7). According to Postman, one of the problems of technopoly is that the success of the scientific method helped to make a mockery of the narratives of religion (1992, p. 50). Loving resistance, on the other hand, believes that religious narratives still have value, and Horton acknowledges

that Christianity informed his communication ethic and provided him with a narrative grounding for his work.

Horton allowed a faith in Christian love to inform his approach to people. The notion of loving your neighbor taught him not to view people instrumentally—as a means to an end—and the importance of looking out for all people. Horton (1998) states:

> It's the principle of trying to serve other people and build a loving world. If you believe people are of worth, you can't treat anybody inhumanely, and that means you not only have to love and respect people, but you have to think in terms of building a society that people can profit most from, and that kind of society has to work on the principle of equality. Otherwise, somebody's going to be left out. (p. 7)

Earlier, I mentioned Horton's frustration in learning that the poor could work so hard and still remain on the outside of American society. However, this frustration did not grow out of a hatred of or resentment toward the rich. Instead, he held the narrative of Christian love in such esteem that he felt that a just society rested on the notion of loving your neighbor. Loving your neighbor, for Horton, meant making sure they had access to the wealth surrounding them. In a technopoly, the traditions of religion cannot compete with technology and its ability to provide convenience and comfort. Consequently, to embrace the narratives of religion is to recognize that technology and technical thinking cannot serve as a savior. Horton centered his worldview on this notion of love and respect of others, and he would not have reached this worldview without the influence of his mother and the narratives of religion.

More specifically, the narrative of religion and Christian love grounded Horton's work and educational philosophy at Highlander. Horton recalled a situation in which he was asked what were the greatest influences on the work he did at Highlander; Horton said, "I said that if I

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look back and think of influences that have been most important to me in trying to figure out what to do, they were the Bible, Shelly, and Marx" (Horton & Freire, 1990, p. 34)—I will put Percy Bysshe Shelley and Karl Marx in abeyance, so that I can focus on the influence of the Bible. Although later in life Horton became disenchanted with religion, he concedes the importance of the Bible and the base it provided for his line of thinking. Horton stated, "First was the Bible because it gave me an ethical background. It gave me a sense of the great religious truths and insights, and I was shaped a lot by that in terms of my values" (Horton & Freire, 1990, p. 34). In *The Abolition of Man*, C.S. Lewis (1943) argues religion can provide a firm footing as a way to navigate the complexities imposed upon humans by science and technology. Religion provides Horton with the strength to hold the value of other people close to his heart. The heart of Highlander's ethic began with Horton's commitment to the Christian love he learned from the Bible.

Before Horton went to study at Union Theological Seminary, Horton read Harry Ward's *Our Economic Morality and the Ethic of Jesus* (1929). In this text, Ward tries to illustrate the ways in which the materialism of capitalism conflicts with the ethic of Christianity. Ward was a professor at Union and, his text partly inspired Horton to attend Union (Horton, 1998, p. 32). Horton wanted to figure out how love could bring about a sense of social justice. Again, love meant treating all people humanely and with respect. Later, Horton admitted that this faith inspired his practices at Highlander. Horton stated in a 1968 speech at the Friends World Institute, "One of my friends, a minister, wrote me one time that Highlander was a faith venture. I suppose it is. But our faith is not [in] a method, or any kind of educational approach, but in the people themselves" (Jacobs, 2003, p. 177). Given this statement, Horton's educational philosophy might seem like a secular faith, but his faith in people begins with the notion of

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loving your neighbor. Love and faith in people means that people have the capacity to make their

own decisions, and people can only have the capacity to make decisions if you respect their

immanent value. Immanent value, for Horton, begins with love of your neighbor and the

narrative of religion, not in the scientific method of an educational technique.

Horton's Commitment to Common Sense

Loving resistance fighters are also those "who refuse to allow psychology or any 'social

science' to pre-empt the language and thought of common sense" (Postman, 1992, p. 184). As I

discussed in Chapter 3, loving resistance as a philosophy of communication embraces common

sense because common sense creates a form of knowledge embedded in the community. Postman

derided psychology and social science because of their faith in numbers but also—and especially

important for this project—psychology and social science tends to place order onto a community

and communicative situation rather than letting the common sense of the community emerge.

Community members do not stand above the world, so common sense that emerges from

community becomes a form of logic or rationality that is beholden to community. The nefarious

elements of psychology and social science do not take into account community perspective.

Consequently, the loving resistance fighter allows for common sense to prevail, and the loving

resistance fighter does not defer to the theories and perspectives that come from academic

disciplines that might be detached from community.

Earlier in this chapter I wrote about Horton's experiences in Ozone, Tennessee and how

the experiences at Ozone informed Horton's quest to help people find the answers to their

collective problems. The experiences at Ozone put Horton on the path to Union, Chicago, and

Denmark. The founding of Highlander operated as an attempt to build something permanent that

could recreate the educational experiences at Ozone. Early on in his travels, Horton learned to

listen to others, and his faith in and love for people helped him to realize that the people themselves are the folks with the knowledge and experience. Horton (1998) recalled, "I learned to listen [...] They were experts in their own lives and their own experiences. And those experiences could have something to teach me even if I didn't see it at the moment" (p. 20). Through the act of listening, Horton realized that his perspective and what he learned at Cumberland University—or in other academic places—did not confer him with knowledge to help people. Horton's willingness to listen illustrates a commitment to common sense. Arnett and Holba (2012) write, "Common sense is not innate; it is a practice learned within communities that shapes our personal and/or professional lives" (p. 211). Horton spoke to and learned from the members of the community; he recognized that he was not an expert on the communities he engaged. Instead, the communities had their own expertise. Whatever Horton may have learned prior to his engagement with the community could not preempt what the community already knew. Not only does this illustrate Horton's act are the acts of loving resistance, but his willingness also connects to the philosophy of communication. Common sense as part of the philosophy of communication should guide "meaningful interpretation of communicative practices within a community" (Arnett & Holba, 2012, p. 211). Horton listened to and tried to understand community members before ever attempting to intervene.

Horton carried this common sense approach with him as built and sustained the Highlander Folk School. Describing the Highlander approach to education, Horton stated, "We won't go into anybody's community or organization as an expert, but we will come in and try to help you with your problem" (Freire & Horton, 1990, p. 68). As an example, when Horton and Highlander worked with Esau Jenkins and Septima Clark in Johns Island, South Carolina to help members of the black community pass literacy tests required for ballot access, they collectively

agreed to eschew using trained teachers who would have relied on educational theory (Horton & Feire, 1990, p. 70). Horton stated, "Trained teachers would have to be thinking in terms of what they had learned, methodology, and they would identify illiterate adults with illiterate children" (Horton & Freire, 1990, p. 70). Instead, Highlander, Jenkins, and Clark decided to ask a local hair stylist, Bernice Robinson, to start teaching the literacy classes that became the Citizenship Schools (Horton & Freire, 1990, p. 71). The black community in Johns Island held black hair stylists in high regard because black hair stylists owned their own businesses and did not rely upon whites for income; this gave black hair stylists a great deal of independence (Horton, 1998, p. 102). Through teaching "very practical sort of things" that would help the people of Johns Island manage their daily lives, Robinson had more people want to join the class, and eighty percent of the students who were in the class were able to pass the South Carolina literacy test and gain access to the ballot (Horton & Freire, 1990, pp. 72-73). Horton and Highlander did not come to Johns Island as experts. The methodology employed by most trained teachers would not have met or understood the communicative practices and needs of the community. In fact, when trained teachers did come and try to teach adults at Johns Island, many members of the community mocked the teachers and their teaching methods that were designed for children (Horton & Freire, 1990, p. 69). In employing someone who was not a teacher, Bernice Robinson, educational methodology would not try to impose order onto the situation in Johns Island. The approach allowed the rationality of the community to emerge and shape educational and communicative practices.

Through these experiences, Horton's educational philosophy emerges as a philosophy that relies on common sense, not the theories inherent to a specific discipline or social science. Horton believed that "an educator should never become an expert" (Horton & Freire, 1990, p.

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128). Expertise allows one to come into a community with a presupposition of how things could or should work, and it pushes aside the common sense of the community. Through listening Horton realized that people have their own expertise to solve their own problems. If an educator or expert comes into a situation and imposes their methodology, then there can be success, but "there's no *empowerment* or people, not learning" (Horton & Freire, 1990, p. 130, emphasis in original). Horton's educational philosophy grounds itself in the notion that the people can solve their own problems, and since the people are in community together, they can create solutions grounded in common sense, not the imposing of order from an academic discipline. Horton stated, "If I'm the expert, my expertise is in knowing *not* to be an expert or in knowing how I feel experts should be used" (Horton & Freire, 1990, p. 131, emphasis in original). In solving community problems, the community rationality matters more than the expertise grounded in social science.

Horton and Technology

As Postman emphasized and as I have claimed throughout this project, loving resistance to American technopoly hinges on keeping distance from technology. For the loving resistance fighter, technology should appear "somewhat strange, never inevitable, never natural" (Postman, 1992, p. 185). Unlike the previous loving resistance fighters articulated by this project, Wendell Berry and Robert A. Caro, Myles Horton does not speak directly and explicitly about his relationship with technology. This complicates my labeling Horton as a loving resistance fighter.

However, I do think it is important to remember that technology, for Postman, consists of more than any single, physical technological device. Recall Postman's discussion of invisible technologies. Postman (1992) writes, "[O]ur most powerful ideological instrument is the technology of language itself" (p. 123). Of particular concern for Postman (1992) were the

invisible technologies and language that dealt with questionnaires and statistics, and that is why he claimed that a loving resistance fighters are people "who pay no attention to a poll" and "who have freed themselves from the belief in the magical power of numbers" (pp. 183-184). If we remember this expansive notion of technology, there is a case that Horton does distance himself from technology.

From the beginning, Highlander Folk School explicitly rejected the use of questionnaires in their workshops. In the early Highlander workshops, Horton and the other idealistic staff members came into the Folk School with very specific ideas about education and the problems—and the accompanying solutions—facing the people of Appalachia (Horton, 1998, p. 68). In essence, Horton (1998) stated, "We ended up doing what most people do when they come to a place like Appalachia" (p. 68). The early educators at Highlander also wanted to drive the conversation with the people of Appalachia to focus on working class solidarity, a nod to Horton's Marxist roots, but Horton stated, "We also found out that our talk about brotherhood and democracy and shared experiences was irrelevant to people in Grundy County in 1932. They were hungry" (1998, p. 69). Given these failings in trying to understand the people and needs of Appalachia, it might make sense to ask the people questions in the form of a questionnaire, but Highlander rejected this option. Horton (1998) pointed out the problem with a questionnaire, "Questionnaires wouldn't work, either, because we would only get what the people thought we wanted" (p. 69). Although Horton does not state this explicitly, one can infer from these descriptions Horton's beliefs about questionnaires and an approach to people: a questionnaire reflects the interests of the person who designs and implements the questionnaire. An individual who approaches an educational situation with a preconceived idea about problems and solutions imposes those problems and solutions onto the people. The language of Marxism and the

administration of questionnaires would have been an imposition of ideology onto the people of Appalachia. While there were impositions at the start of Highlander, the school made the decision to move away from this approach. The people working at Highlander recognized that their language carried with it an ideology, and the ideology carried by their language might not help the people.

Dropping the language of expertise and Marxism demanded that Horton and the people at Highlander learn the language of the community of the people in Appalachia. Horton (1998) claimed, "We had to learn a new language" (p. 69). The language of the people of Appalachia and the people that they wanted to help could not be learned in a college course or in a textbook, so it had to be learned through observation. Horton (1998) describes this learning process, "Since we didn't have the right language, we had to learn to observe people: to watch the way they related to each other [...] and to be sensitive to their reactions to their experience" (p. 69). The language that they tried to impose at the beginning of Highlander did not fit the situation; the language fit the ideology of the teachers. Horton learned that their language was not natural to the environment or the situation, and because it was not natural to the situation, they had to unlearn their language. Highlander staff members had to pay attention to the language of the people. The language of expertise and working class solidarity did not naturally work in that environment. The language Horton picked up during his experiences at Union, in Chicago, and in Denmark were not inevitable in Appalachia. The outside language could not order the world for the people in Appalachia.

Because Horton and the people working at Highlander rejected questionnaires and the ideology embedded in their language, I feel it safe to say that Horton distanced himself from invisible technologies. The notion of technology goes beyond any single technological

development, such as the invention of the computer or self-driving automobile. In his summary of Postman's corpus, Gencarelli (2006) claims that Postman viewed language as a technology, a medium, and an environment (pp. 242-243). Humans invented language, and because of this it operates as a medium that we can understand environmentally. Since language is an environment, we can explore the consequences of language for the people living in a given environment. Part of Postman's media ecology requires us to take a hard look at language, and this allows us to think of language as something more than a neutral carrier of messages (Gencarelli, 2006, p. 242). Consequently, a loving resistance fighter should recognize that language can be strange and unnatural, even if two people technically speak the same language. Horton recognized that his language did seem strange to the people in his workshops; therefore, his language was not inevitable or natural. Horton and the people at Highlander sought to distance themselves from the language they acquired. They distanced themselves from the invisible technology of language. By attempting to distance himself from this technology, Horton engaged in the act of loving resistance.

Horton's belief in America's vitality, emphasis on human connections, ethical grounding in religious narratives, commitment to common sense, and distanced approach to invisible technologies all illustrate an affiliation with the act of loving resistance. His story and educational philosophy provide the narrative ground to understand the terrain of loving resistance in our contemporary moment. Having established Horton as a loving resistance fighter, I will next discuss how Horton helps us to think through the problem of individual autonomy that is embedded in technopoly and our current digital media environment.

Horton's Rejection of Individual Autonomy

In this section, I will discuss how Myles's Horton's loving resistance helps us to think through the problems of individual autonomy. As Postman (1992) notes, "No one is an expert on how to live a life" (p, 182). Horton does not provide expertise on living a life but a path to follow. While we might follow the steps that Horton created, we need not place our feet in the exact same position as he did. Put simply, Horton provides us with the path created by footsteps, not a step by step manual. I choose the metaphor of a path in partial reference to the book Horton co-authored with Paolo Freire, *We Make the Road by Walking* (1990). We go along making a path as we think away from individual autonomy and toward communities. Horton provides us with the ideas necessary to make our own road or path in response to technopoly. Hence, Horton provides use with the narrative grounding for loving resistance to individual autonomy.

In order to develop this claim, in this section, I will first discuss how Postman did not envision loving resistance as maximizing individual autonomy; instead, loving resistance, as a unity of contraries, attempts to temper our individualistic impulses. Second, I describe how Horton tempers his own revolutionary impulses by creating an educational philosophy that resists hegemonic forces without devolving into a utopian vision of ultimate success. Third, I discuss how Horton's educational philosophy places the individual in context as opposed to the view that the individual can triumph over all constraints. Fourth, I discuss how Horton's educational philosophy pushes for collective empowerment instead of simply trying to support and sustain an individual. Finally, I discuss the ways in which Horton used print culture and reading, despite the individualistic impulses of print, to move away from individual autonomy and toward collective thinking.

Unity of Contraries: Resistance and Individual Autonomy

In Chapter 3, I discussed how the loving resistance fighter operates as a unity of contraries. A loving resistance fighter can appreciate some aspects of technology, and the loving resistance fighter need not function as a Luddite who hope to smash and reject all technology. A loving resistance fighter cannot stand above the constraints of technopoly and modernity, and the loving resistance fighter must work out how to exist in the scene of technopoly. The loving resistance fighter does not view technology as an "all or nothing" proposition. As Postman and Chapters 4 and 5 illustrate, print technology remains central to the notion of loving resistance. The unity of contraries helps us to add meaning to loving resistance's relationship to technopoly. It reminds us that loving resistance need not be a rejection of technology as a whole. In a world where ideology forces upon us the idea that everything exists as black or white, loving resistance helps us to keep in mind the gray areas of our existence. If we embrace the gray areas, like loving resistance does, then we find ourselves in a world where we appreciate technology but do not view technology as a savior.

The reason I bring back the notion of unity of contraries relates to loving resistance's orientation toward individual autonomy. Also in Chapter 3, I discussed how loving resistance does not place blind faith in individual autonomy. Loving resistance's embrace of the aged, family loyalty, and face-to-face human connections illustrates the ways in which loving resistance offers narrative grounding to resist technopoly and the secular trinity. However, Postman's original description of the loving resistance fighter might indicate that the loving resistance fighter succumbs to the rhetorical pull toward individual autonomy. Loving resistance functions as an "individual response" (Postman, 1992, p. 182). Postman (1992) writes loving resistance is an approach of "what the individual can do irrespective of what the culture is doing" (p. 182). One could infer that Postman advocates for a maximalist view of individual autonomy

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that would enable a person to act in ways that eschew all cultural concerns and trends. However, here, again, Buber's (1965/1966) idea of unity of contraries becomes important to the articulation of loving resistance. Loving resistance does not and need not embrace a maximalist view of individual autonomy. Postman did not view individual autonomy as necessarily good or bad; as he writes in *Teaching as A Conserving Activity* (1979), "From an ecological point of view, nothing is good in itself. [...] Is the development of individual autonomy desirable? Only to the extent that it is modulated by social norms" (p. 18). If we combine thinking from the philosophy of communication with Postman's media ecology, we learn that the norms that bind individual autonomy have been eroded. Postman did not have a maximalist view of individual autonomy, and Postman's tying loving resistance to human connection illustrates why it does not embrace a maximalist view of individual autonomy. My discussion of Myles Horton's rejection of individual autonomy will illustrate why it need not embrace the maximalist view. As narrative grounding for loving resistance, Horton's educational philosophy tempers tendencies to embrace the inherent goodness of individual autonomy by focusing on the importance of collective experiences.

A Tempered Educational Philosophy

The tyranny of individualism that grew out of the moderate Enlightenment structures itself on the belief in the inherent goodness of progress, efficiency, and individual autonomy (Arnett, Fritz, & Holba, 2007, p. 121). Horton's educational philosophy runs counter to the individualism of the moderate Enlightenment and toward the more radical elements of the Enlightenment. Recall that thinking aligned with radical Enlightenment worked to disrupt the hegemony of the monarchies and the Church. Horton's educational philosophy seeks to disrupt the hegemonic forces of late capitalism. I would also add that his educational philosophy seeks to

disrupt technopoly. A revolutionary spirit guides Horton, but, unlike Marx, Horton does not try to predict what a revolution will look like and does not try to presume the specific goals of a revolution (Horton, 1998, pp. 226-227). Despite his commitment to Marx, Horton does not envision a revolution of the proletariat as a way to disrupt the hegemony of economic forces. Instead, Horton holds a vision for the future that remains amorphous. The revolution of the proletariat has an end point, but Horton's vision does not. Horton (1998) wants people to be "able to govern themselves" (p. 227). However, Horton (1998) states, "[T]he goal I'm talking about is one that can never be reached. It's a direction, a concept of society that grows as you go along" (p. 227). Horton strives for freedom, but he does not take a maximalist view of freedom and individual autonomy. Horton speaks about a freedom to govern, not about a freedom of the individual to act without concern for others. Horton's educational philosophy does not suggest that there would be some correct method of achieving this freedom. Horton never viewed himself as an expert, and if he offered an exact solution, he would fall into the trap of becoming an expert.

One might accuse Horton of believing in the inherent goodness of progress, but if we remember the precepts drawn from Wendell Berry and Chapter 4, we can see how Horton's vision for freedom does not rest itself on the notion of progress. Horton does not fall into the trap of arrogant ignorance. Horton does not presume that things will automatically become better. Moreover, Horton reminds us that as we move along we cannot harm others while moving. Horton (1998) writes, "A long-range goal has to be something for everybody. It can't be a goal that helps some people but hurts others" (p. 228). In this sense, Horton embraces the precept of "do not harm." It implies that we might go nowhere, but we must "go nowhere correctly" as a way to avoid doing harm. Horton (1998) also claims, "My vision cannot be achieved by me. [...]

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It's a dream which I can't even dream. Other people will pick it up and go beyond" (p. 228). The future does not depend upon him. Others with a similar vision will have to continue the work or expand on the vision. Horton does not move forward with undo confidence in himself, because he does not even have a specific plan as to move forward. Horton does not propose to move forward in a way that can harm others. Horton seeks a future in which we are free from hegemonic forces, but he does not have the confidence or arrogance to say how we should proceed. Moderate Enlightenment suggests that we act on the ground of progress, efficiency, and individual autonomy. Horton suggests that we move away from hegemony, but he goes no further than that. Horton restrains himself. Because he restrains himself, he moves away from a maximalist view of individual autonomy, and this move way from individual autonomy constitutes a move away from the tyranny of individualism.

The Individual in Context

Unlike a faith in individual autonomy that grounds individualism, Horton grounds his educational philosophy in a situated self, a person in a historical and social context. Certainly, Horton's ability to adapt his language to the people of Appalachia and his willingness to switch the focus of Highlander to meet the needs of people illustrates this idea. If Horton did not ground his philosophy in a situated self, he would have created a learning environment that might not adapt to the needs and situations of the people coming to Highlander. Moreover, Horton explicitly acknowledges that he changes given the context and situation. In *We Make the Road by Walking*, his co-author and interlocutor, Paolo Freire makes the following comment: "Myles, works inside this social and historical context" (Horton & Freire, 1990, p. 10). In response to this comment, Horton quickly reminds Freire that he is not the only educator at Highlander; others that work at Highlander also think about context and the historical moment (Horton & Freire,

1990, p. 10). Horton's first reaction is not to place himself above the community at Highlander, and he acknowledges that he is only one person in the community. This, in part, illustrates that he does not place himself above the work completed at Highlander. Instead, he is only part of the work at Highlander. If Horton were guided by the impulse of individual autonomy, he might have taken more credit for the work at Highlander.

Further amplifying his belief in the importance of context and the situated self, Horton states, "[M]y ideas have changed and are constantly changing and *should* change and that I'm as proud of my inconsistencies as I am my consistencies" (Horton & Freire, 1990, p. 10, emphasis in original). Horton rejects the notion that one individual can simply select the right technique and apply it in every situation. The situation changes, so the person changes. If contradictions occur, those contradictions do not matter as much as the long term goal of freedom. The person must respond to the communicative and situational demands. Horton goes on, "I'm a different person in different situations. [...] Wait three or four years, and I'll be thinking something else. But there's a consistency in the sense that the direction is the same" (Horton & Freire, 1990, p. 11). Horton's educational philosophy, although it consistently emphasizes human connections and common sense, does not rely on him creating and perfecting some method of instruction to be rigidly applied in every workshop at Highlander. Horton acknowledges that he does not stand above the learning environment. On the contrary, the learning environment shapes Horton and Highlander's approach. Horton claims, "The constantly changing program at Highlander is based on the social and economic issues that affect people in our part of the United States" (Jacobs, 2003, p. 217). The historical context or moment becomes larger than the individual educator or educational program.

Collective Empowerment

At a young age, Horton realized the importance of collective action, as opposed to individual action, and he carried this belief with him as he developed workshops at Highlander. During his first work experience as a teenager, Horton learned that organizations tried to solve problems individually, not collectively (Horton, 1998, p. 9). Horton learned that a consequence of this type of orientation would be that, inevitably, some people would be left behind by the organization. This experience, coupled with Horton's belief that inequalities were ingrained into the system, led Horton to study cooperatives in college (Horton, 1998, p. 14). The study of cooperatives led to his interest in collective learning and the experiences at Ozone, Tennessee (Horton, 1998, p. 20). After his time at Ozone, Horton had a brief flirtation with the idea of utopian communities as a way to navigate the problems of individual action and the injustices of the system. However, Horton found utopian communities to be just as detached as individual action (Horton, 1998, p. 30). These experiences pressed Horton to think about things collectively; he wrote, "I understood that you couldn't act alone, and that you couldn't withdraw into a utopian community. To deal with injustice you had to act in the world. You had to share what you knew" (Horton, 1998, p 30). A duty toward others and not the self became the basis for Horton's pursuit of the experiences that led to Highlander, and Horton realized that it would not just be one individual or one community that could bring about change. Collective empowerment became the way to cope with the injustices of the system.

I previously mentioned the Citizenship Schools that started at Johns Island, South Carolina. These schools serve as an example of the type of collective empowerment that Horton and Highlander sought to form. While Horton and Highlander were involved, Esau Jenkins and Septima Clark, people who attended Highlander workshops, drove the push for and creation of the Citizenship Schools. Horton (1998) states, "Highlander doesn't initiate programs; we help

former students carry out the programs that they themselves ask us to help them with" (p. 100).

If Horton championed individual autonomy, Horton and Highlander would have come into Johns

Island as experts. On the contrary, Horton trusted the members of the Johns Island community to

make their own decisions. Horton did not act without restraint, seeking to control the world

around him. Horton focused on assisting the members of the Johns Island community resolve

their issues themselves, collectively, and as a community.

John Island illustrated the following precept of Highlander and Horton's educational

philosophy: "The best teachers of poor and working people are the people themselves. They are

the experts on their own experiences and problems" (Horton, 1998, p. 152). Jenkins, Clark, and

Bernice Robinson were members of the Johns Island community. They would understand what

would work and what would not work in the Johns Island community. Trusting the people of a

community requires a rejection of individual autonomy. Arnett, Fritz, and Holba (2007) claim,

"The disembedded communicator became the model of the competent communicator" (p. 121).

Belief in individual autonomy allows lifting the communicator out of the communicative

situation. Only an autonomous individual can be disconnected or disembedded from others. The

competent communicator acts as a "detached, self-confident communicator imposing ideas upon

another" (Arnett, Fritz, & Holba, 2007, p. 121). While I believe Horton's educational philosophy

illustrated competence, Horton's approach does not represent the competency that grew out of

the moderate Enlightenment described by Arnett, Fritz, & Holba (2007). Horton and Highlander

do not confidently impose ideas upon others; they trust people to build their own ideas within the

community. Horton's teaching philosophy holds that he and the members of the Highlander staff

are not the best teachers or the most qualified experts. The members of the community become

the best teachers and experts because they have the embedded knowledge of the community. Horton's experiences with the people on Johns Island illustrates this.

In *The Long Haul* (1998), Horton does outline the "assumptions" of the workshops held at Highlander (p. 153). The assumptions of the workshop do not constitute a plan or method. Horton (1998) explains, "What we sought was to set people's thinking apparatus in motion, while at the same time trying to teach brotherhood and democracy" (p. 152). By setting the thinking apparatus in motion, the people themselves will have the opportunity to work through their problems and solutions to problems together. Highlander does not impose brotherhood and democracy; instead, the staff at Highlander hope that brotherhood and democracy become the outgrowth of the discussion of the collective problems. The assumptions of the workshop illustrate how the "thinking apparatus" could potentially lead to collective empowerment and a sense of togetherness. Horton claims that a workshop should: 1) include a common problem/goal grounded in student experiences, 2) be grounded in the belief that people have the capacity to resolve their common problem, 3) have an environment—the circle of learners—that can provide an opportunity for common problems and solutions to develop, 4) have staff that would work with students in the field and learn from the students, 5) have staff members willing to assist the students in finding the appropriate information that they themselves decided they need (1998, p. 153). In addition to these assumptions, as needed, the workshop leader works to maintain solidarity and unity within the circle of learners (Horton, 1998, p. 153). Highlander injects only two values into the circle of learners: 1) the value of the freedom of speech, 2) the value of social equality/nondiscrimination (Horton, 1998, p. 155).

For the purposes of this project, whether these assumptions and injections of value technically work or meet some sort of learning outcome does not matter. What matters is that

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Horton and Highlander's educational philosophy does not impose their ideas onto the members of the workshop. Unlike a traditional learning environment, Highlander does not give out examinations or grades to see if the students learn what the teacher taught them (Horton, 1998, p. 152). Grades, examinations, final projects, and student learning outcomes develop from the instructor, not the students. Moreover, since the folks at Highlander respond to the social and historical context, these assumptions about workshops become subject to change. Again, the "thinking apparatus" becomes central. Highlander provides the space and opportunity for the community to work to resolve their common problems. While the assumptions of the workshop and the success in places like Johns Island are telling, we must remember that Horton does not view Highlander as the supreme educational model. Horton (1998) claims, "There is no method to learn from Highlander. What we do involves trusting people and believing in their ability to think for themselves. Our desire is to empower people collectively, not individually" (p. 157). Horton relies on the embedded knowledge of the workshop members as a way to reach collective empowerment.

Here, we can also see how Myles Horton provides the narrative grounding for loving resistance and its attendant skepticism toward individual autonomy. Horton rejects and decenters faith in method. Horton disavows the invisible technologies embedded in methodology. Through his faith in people and human connections, Horton created an environment at Highlander that places trust in people, not in method, technological thinking, or technique. By decentering method, Highlander allows for collective thinking and collective empowerment to emerge. Highlander does not employ a team of experts to solve the problems within a community. Highlander privileges the people within a given community. Horton and Highlander offer narrative grounding for the rejection of individual autonomy because the Highlanger narrative

does not rely on a single hero coming into a community to solve a problem. Communicative competence emerges from the embedded members of the community. Highlander suggests that people can learn and solve problems in ways that do not rely on a given technology or technique.

Reading and Collective Thinking

Moreover, the print medium grounds Horton's educational philosophy. This does not mean that writing, reading, and print formed the center of Horton and Highlander's educational program. Yes, Highlander focused on adult literacy through the Citizenship Schools, but as noted earlier, the educational program did not center on examinations and the rote learning associated with the print medium. Moreover, Highlander's circle of learners resembles what McLuhan (2003) might call a cool medium. We might think of the circle of learners as something akin to a seminar in which there is a low definition of information and high levels of participation. The circle of learners requires the students to fill in the open spaces and complete the information. Print, on the other hand, operates as a hot medium (McLuhan, 2003). Print is high definition, with low participation. Using McLuhan's terms, the circle of learners is quite unlike print because the circle of learners is cool rather than hot. When I claim that print grounds Horton's educational philosophy, I argue that Horton's educational philosophy—and I return to Neil Postman's (1985) description of the typographic mind from *Amusing Ourselves to Death*—grew out of the typographic mind and out of the print medium.

Earlier in this chapter, I discussed Horton's voraciousness as a reader at a young age. I also mentioned Horton's experiences in college and how reading became central to his time at Cumberland University. Both his experiences as a child and in college point to the centrality of reading and print to Horton's educational development. While other media did exist and Horton

witnessed the birth of electronic media, print media became central to his intellectual development. Horton's parents were educators and literate people in the rural South, and reading informed his way of thinking. In this sense, Horton came into adulthood through the print medium. If we go back to the media ecology precepts of viewing media as either environments or culture, we can see Horton and his manner of thinking as an outgrowth of the print medium. Print would shape his worldview, and as I will demonstrate, his educational philosophy.

Also earlier in this chapter, I provided a discussion of the importance of the Bible to Horton's thinking and the centrality of religious narratives to his thinking. Horton identified the profound influence of the Bible, Percy Bysshe Shelley, and Karl Marx on his way of thinking (Horton & Freire, 1990, p. 34). His engagement with the Bible, Shelley, and Marx illustrate the profound impact of print and reading on his way of thinking. Print grounded his educational philosophy. Print grounded his way of thinking and his educational philosophy continues the ecological metaphor of media ecology. The seeds of Miles Horton's thinking grew out of the soil of print. Print served as the foundation. If the greatest influences on Horton's way of thinking come through the Bible, Shelley, and Marx, then his way of thinking comes from the printed text of the Bible, the works of Shelley, and the works of Marx. He does not dialogue directly with the people; instead, he engages through the hot medium of print, allowing the medium to have its influence. As Postman (1985) noted, print is a serious medium capable of producing serious ideas. Print's seriousness shaped Horton. I already discussed how the Bible and religious narratives shaped Horton's ethical approach to others. I want to take a moment to discuss both Shelley and Marx.

Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound*, originally published in 1820, also proved important to Horton. As a college student running vacation Bible schools during the summer, a minister gave

Horton a copy of Shelley's collected works (Horton, 1998, p. 29). Shelley and *Prometheus Unbound* provided Horton the resources necessary to combat his feelings of cynicism about the world at large (Horton, 1998, p. 29). *Prometheus Unbound* continues Greek tragedian Aeschylus's story about Prometheus, who gives the gift of fire to humans and is punished by the gods for this act (Lynch & Stillinger, 2012, p. 793). Shelley's Romantic closet drama leads the reader to conclude that humans have the capacity to make changes to the evil—created by institutions—that they see around them (Lynch & Stillinger, 2012, p. 794). Like his wife's (Mary Shelley) *Frankenstein Or The Modern Prometheus*, *Prometheus Unbound* reflects the thinking of his father-in-law, William Godwin, and mother-in-law, Mary Wallstonecraft. All believed that in the unnaturalness of the ordering of society and the capacity for change. Shelley inspired Horton because "Shelley was fighting against evil, pained by the suffering he saw and defying the world as an individual" (Horton, 1998, p. 29). Certainly, one could read Horton's interpretation of Shelley as a call for individual action in defiance of culture, but Horton recognized that he could not simply go alone on a path of individual defiance (Horton, 1998, p. 30). While important to his worldview, Horton tempered his commitment to individual action and Romanticism; if he continued to only allow *Prometheus Unbound* to influence him, he would "have just been an isolated creature crying in the wilderness" (Horton, 1998, p. 31). While motivating him to act, Horton knew he should resist the individualistic impulse of Shelley, in part, because of the influence of the Bible that developed Horton's impulse to help others.

Because Horton read everything he could find, Horton first encountered the works of Karl Marx through other works that cited Marx (Horton, 1998, p. 42). Marx's works offered modes of analyzing society and taught Horton the importance of helping the poor and working class. Horton did not accept Marx's works wholesale; Horton found his conclusions and

predictions about the future unpersuasive (Horton & Freire, 1990, p. 35). However, Horton states, "I was terrifically impressed by the way of analyzing, the way of looking at society. And I was also very much impressed by his devotion to the poor" (Horton & Freire, 1990, p. 35). Horton appreciated the way Marx gathered information about the system as a whole (Horton, 1998, p. 3). Marx's works demonstrated to Horton the possibility of offering an even handed analysis of systems. Unlike Shelley, who focused purely on the notion of resistance, Marx illustrated how one could unveil the injustices within a system without falling into the trap of rage and anger. Marx's work, claimed Horton (1998), "moved me away from individualism" (p. 43). Whatever one might think about Marx, his analysis, and conclusions, his influence on Horton helped Horton think beyond the notion of individual action.

While one could look at the influence of the Bible, Shelley, and Marx on Horton as purely didactic—i.e. Horton taking bits and pieces from each work and author. However, this perspective on Horton is not my argument. Horton noted the influence of all three, but I want to consider the influence of the environment of the print medium on Horton. In writing about print and the typographic mind, Postman (1985) writes, "It [print] is serious because meaning demands to be understood. A written sentence calls upon its author to say something, upon its reader to know the import of what is said" (p. 50). A reader must discern the written word "without the assistance of either beauty or community" (Postman, 1985, p. 50). Horton, a man who read everything he encountered, grew in this environment. Horton ventured through the texts by himself, but the print environment requires one to "manage" what one reads (Postman, 1985, p. 51). The print culture and environment requires one to think through the texts, to note when the text includes errors, and to rationally analyze what the author wrote. Postman (1985) writes, "In a print culture, readers make mistakes when they don't notice, or even worse, don't

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care" when an author makes mistakes (p. 51). In reading the Bible, Shelley, and Marx, Horton could note the errors in thinking and conclusions. Horton could determine what would happen if one took the conclusions to the extreme. Horton could identify when writers made mistakes. The Bible, Shelley, and Marx can coexist with one another. Horton, armed with a typographic mind honed by print culture, could make them come together in his education philosophy. Through his reading, Horton concludes that one must work with others—and importantly, one must not work alone—to contend with the evils and injustices created by human systems.

I do not dispute McLuhan's (1962) claim that print culture fostered individualism. Print culture produced and reified the importance of individualism and the belief in the inherent goodness of individual autonomy. However, my examination of Horton's educational philosophy reveals that the print environment has the potential to invoke collective thinking and collective action. When it comes to what McLuhan might call the total effect of print media, the horse is already out of the barn. The individualism of print is here, and we are not returning to the primary orality articulated by Ong (2002). As Strate (2017b) pointed out, our electronic and digital culture, the culture concomitant with technopoly, relies on and co-mixes with the typography of print. Being a keen reader allows one to not fall into the trap of defaulting to individualism. In this sense, print and typography contain the resources to challenge the notion of individual autonomy without slipping into the tyranny of individualism. On the other hand, Audre Lorde (2018) argued that the "master's tools will never dismantle the master's house" (p. 1). Put simply, the tools of domination will not solve the problems of domination. Lorde's argument problematizes my argument. Postman argues that technopoly constitutes a tyranny, and if technopoly and individualism are tyrannies, grounding resistance to these tyrannies in print might end up being a mistake. Ultimately, since we cannot go back to a primary oral culture,

Horton illustrates that even though print was a causal factor to our current situation, it remains a resource for resistance. Loving resistance does not mean total destruction. Instead, it offers a way to move through our current technopoly without succumbing totally to technopoly. One can resist without dismantling, and the print environment contains the resources to resist technopoly and individual autonomy. Horton's educational philosophy illustrates the possibility of collective thinking rooted in print culture.

Horton's Path

Horton's loving resistance to individual autonomy offers a path for others to follow. While those following may take different steps along the path, the path has the same direction. The path moves away from individual autonomy and toward collective action. This movement can be liberatory, but Horton does not speak with the certainty that imbibes Marxist thinking. In addition, Horton illustrates that print and reading can move us toward collective empowerment and collective thinking. Even though the print medium helped to usher in individualism, it offers a path to collective thinking and action. Again, we cannot return to the collectivity of primary orality, but a commitment to reading and print helps us to think beyond the parameters of our current digital media environment. Collective action need not begin on social media platforms. Instead, collective action can begin in the library, but, as I will illustrate in the next section, Horton teaches us that we cannot remain in the library. If we take the literate mind and place it into the classroom, then the literate mind can attune itself and create a semantic and learning environment that allows collective action and thought to grow and prosper. In this manner, the literate mind in the classroom offers resistance to technopoly.

Circle of Learners and the Semantic Environment

In discussing Horton's belief in human connection, I mentioned his educational philosophy's commitment to the circle of learners. Horton (1998) claims, "'Circle' is not an accidental term, for there is no head of the table at Highlander workshops; everybody sits in a circle" (p. 150). In this circle of learners, the participants share experiences, and the staff at Highlander consider themselves as members of this circle, not necessarily the leaders of the group and group discussion (Horton, 1998, p. 150). Even though some members of the Highlander staff might have expertise in the areas under discussion, the staff members might discard that information because it might not necessarily be what the group needs or wants at that exact moment (Horton, 1998, p. 150). The staff at Highlander do not take on the role of leader or expert, and staff members were willing to sublimate their own concerns in favor of the group dynamics. As I will illustrate, Horton and Highlander's commitment to the circle of learners demonstrates a commitment to the semantic environment of the classroom. The semantic environment becomes primary and the content becomes secondary. In this sense, Horton and Highlander offer an ecological approach to the classroom and communication in the classroom. Because of this commitment, we can see how loving resistance to individual autonomy must also commit to promoting and protecting the semantic environment.

As Gencarelli (2006) notes, much of Neil Postman's early career focused on language and education. In *Teaching as a Subversive Activity*, Postman and Charles Weingartner (1969) remind us that a classroom functions as a medium, and the lessons drawn from McLuhan's *Understanding Media* help educators keep schools and education relevant in a changing world. Later in his career, Postman (1979) would temper and alter the claims made in *Teaching as a Subversive Activity*, but Postman still remained committed to viewing the classroom as a medium. Under the precept that media ecology is the study of media as an environment, Postman

invites communication and media scholars to think of the classroom as an environment. At the same time, in *Crazy Talk, Stupid Talk: How We Defeat Ourselves by the Way We Talk and What to Do About It*, Postman (1976) asks us to consider how the environments for communication inform the conversations and the types of talk that take place. Postman (1976) develops the semantic environment as a metaphor to illustrate this point, and he writes, "It says that communication is not stuff or bits or messages. [...] Communication is a situation in which people participate" (p. 8). Communication (or the situation) results from the environment surrounding the communication much like "[g]rowth is a consequence of complex transactions among the plant, the soil, the air, the sun, and water" (Postman, 1976, p. 9). Putting these ideas together, communication that leads to learning results from the environment created by the classroom, and the classroom is only as good as its semantic environment.

Thinking about the semantic environment requires thinking about four elements. Postman (1976) identifies these elements: "first of all, people; second, their purposes; third, the general rules of discourse by which such purposes are usually achieved, and fourth, the particular talk actually being used in the situation" (p. 9). While Postman admits that there are other elements that one could consider, people, purposes, rules of discourse, and talk used in the situation, provide enough context for understanding the semantic environment. Always the moralist, Postman concerned himself with the ways in which the semantic environment became better or worse based upon these four elements. Do the people, the purposes, rules of discourse, and types of talk degrade or improve the human condition. Does the semantic environment make us more or less humane? Thinking about the semantic environment does not equate to detached analysis of "effective" or "ineffective" communication. On the contrary, thinking about the semantic environment requires us to consider the quality of the environment in relation to the human

condition. Consequently, Postman's semantic environment invokes an ethical plea: make an environment that can produce humane talk. Be aware of people, purposes, rules of discourse, and types of talk that degrade the environment.

Since Horton founded Highlander in 1932, he certainly was not thinking explicitly about the semantic environment, but his commitment to the circle of learners illustrates and provides an example of a concern for the semantic environment. Horton (1998) states, "The Highlander workshop is part of a continuum of identifying a problem and finding other people who are trying to deal with it" (p. 148). The people in the semantic environment of Highlander share common problems. Since the participants in the Highlander workshop share a common problem, this creates a situation in which they also arrive at Highlander with a common purpose. In the early years of Highlander, members of the CIO focused on building union leadership and membership. By the 1950s and 1960s, the purpose became organizing and training as part of the movement for Civil Rights. Highlander did not focus on the needs of Highlander, nor did they focus on some specific teaching methodology or subject. Horton and the staff at Highlander believed that the people themselves would be best equipped to both understand and resolve the problems and issues that they faced. This is why, in the circle of learners, the members of Highlander staff focus more on building "a relaxed atmosphere in which the participants feel free to share their experiences" (Horton, 1998, p. 150). Trust in the people and a common purpose allows the discourse and communication at Highlander to foster the development of solutions to problems. As Horton (1998) notes, "The people who come to the workshops have a lot of knowledge that they don't know they have. Highlander gives them a *chance* to explore what they know and what some people bring in as resources can share with them" (p. 148, emphasis in original). The manner in which Horton and Highlander created the workshops and the circle of

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learners ceded control to the group participants rather than actively trying to control all elements of the semantic environment.

To extend Postman's metaphor about the semantic environment, Horton's educational philosophy as practiced at Highlander provided the right conditions for the growth of emancipatory communication and collective action. Again, a plant results from the right mixture of seed, soil, water, nutrients, and sunlight. In the same way, the practice of creating a circle of learners at the Highlander workshops provided the right nutrients for collective action to take place, and, again, the resulting action was not about improving the individual and removing the boundaries on individual autonomy. Instead, the resulting action facilitated the development of programs like the Citizenship Schools. The idea for these did not come from Highlander. The idea came from the people who lived in the soil, water, nutrients, and sunlight found at Highlander. As Horton (1998) states, "Highlander has been a stop in the continuum of defining and trying to solve an important problem, a place to think and plan and share knowledge" (p. 148). Highlander is not a place where members of a movement learn ideas about freedom and justice from the Highlander staff. Horton concedes that the people already know about these concepts. Instead, Highlander is a place of cultivation. It is a place where a semantic environment exists to help the people solve the collective problems together.

If we continue to consider Horton's path of loving resistance to individual autonomy, we must consider how the path might lead to the creation of a semantic environment that fosters collective empowerment and action. Teaching people about the value of collective action cannot happen in isolation. While Horton valued reading and print culture, reading and print culture are not powerful enough on their own to bring about the collective action similar to the action that resulted from Highlander. Communication educators who wish to rebut the forces of technopoly

must remember that even though loving resistance might be an individual act, the act of loving resistance can, and should, think carefully about how it might resist and refuse individual autonomy. Myles Horton learned that he could not retreat from the world and act on his own. He had to engage with others, but engagement with others does not mean forcing ideas on others. People have the ability to see the power in collective action, but the right environment needs to exist to help them see. Horton, by trusting people and their purposes and by allowing the people to lead the conversation, created a semantic environment that allows people to act collectively.

Conclusion: Semantic Environment, Listening, and Dialogic Ethics

In this chapter, I have, first, discussed the problem of individual autonomy in structuring the tyranny of individualism, and contributed to the postmodern literature that seeks to expose the problems of individualism by discussing the ways in which the tradition of media ecology helps to explain the growth of individualism. Second, since media environments contributed to the unchecked belief in individual autonomy, loving resistance, a form of resistance specifically suited to contend with the problems created by the media environment, becomes the narrative ground to navigate through this system of belief in individual autonomy during the digital age. Consequently, I offered Myles Horton as a loving resistance fighter who encourages us to move away from individualism and individual autonomy by offering an approach to collective learning, empowerment, and action. The circle of learners that centers Horton's educational philosophy provides the appropriate semantic environment for the growth of communicative practices that promote community and collective action. Before I close this chapter, I would like to draw two implications of this chapter to the philosophy of communication.

First, as mentioned earlier in this chapter, the movement from community toward individualism and individual autonomy occurred and occurs when the focus of communication

turns toward the speaker and away from the listener. The belief in individual autonomy predicates the belief in what Arnett, Fritz, and Holba (2007) call the disembedded communicative agent who can produce effective communication without understanding the conditions of the community that the speaker addresses. The notion of communication competence embodies this specific belief. The thinking goes that a competent communicator is one who possesses the proper skills and can adapt to any communicative situation. This view of communication places emphasis on the speaker, not the community of listeners addressed in an interlocutory moment. The competent communicator need not be tethered to any single community; consequently, the competent communicator must remain autonomous. The competent communicator must remain autonomous because the demands of the community could prevent the development of the needed skills. Littlejohn and Jabusch's (1982) model of communication competence proves illustrative of this point when they describe communication competence as "the ability and willingness of an individual to participate responsibly in a transaction in such a way to maximize the outcomes of shared meanings" (p. 29). Their description of competence centers on the individual. I do not mean to suggest that theirs operates as an impoverished approach, but the focus of their description rests on an individual participating in a transaction, not as an individual entering a community. Their description gives the impression of an autonomous individual participating in a purely economic transaction. This impression is not inherently bad, but without the inclusion of the community of listeners in their description, the maximization of shared meanings seems to be at the command and control of the speaker.

While I have focused on classroom communication and the semantic environment, the lessons from Myles Horton and the Highlander Folk School have implications to other

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communication contexts. The circle of learners and the semantic environment decenters the individual by focusing on listening. Earlier, I mentioned Horton's emphasis on listening, but the import of listening extends beyond the classroom. Horton focuses on listening in favor of speaking because he realized the others have the power to explain and understand the problems of their own lives. The narrative ground provided for us by Myles Horton reminds us of the importance of listening when in communication with others. Horton's narrative teaches us that we need not speak to learn or demonstrate care toward others. Our first obligation is to recognize the people around us and listen. In a digital media environment that promotes the senses of touch and sight, the focus on listening brings us back to the primacy of the ear. While the ear may not be our primary sense organ, Horton, at the very least, reminds of the possibilities and joys that come with listening. The focus on listening is just another way in which we can carry Horton's loving resistance with us as we navigate our relations with others.

Second, Horton and Highlander's commitment to the circle of learners and the semantic environment enhances our understanding of dialogic ethics. Dialogic ethics is not a cure-all for contemporary problems and controversies, but it offers us hope that if we move away from our impulse to speak, then we can begin to listen and assist others (Arnett, 2011, p. 46). Arnett (2011) describes what is necessary for a dialogic communication ethic:

> *A minimalist position on dialogic ethics begins with the assumption that we do not have to hold a great deal in common, but we must be willing to learn from the Other as we minimize our impulse to tell, even as we recognize the inevitability of the "rhetorical" nature of our meeting.* (p. 57, emphasis in original)

At a minimum, a dialogic communication ethic asks that we withhold our desire to speak. We will inevitably speak, and when we speak our communication will become rhetorical. We will

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attempt to influence others. Despite the inevitability of speaking and attempting to influence, we can still pause to listen and learn from the others in community with us. The people at Highlander certainly did not have the same thinking on all matters as they entered the workshop. There was difference. There would have been moments in which there was a rhetorical turn, but the environment set up by Horton and the staff at Highlander worked to provide the right conditions for listening. Through an emphasis on listening, the participants were able to work together to contend with their common problems. Because of this, those interested in dialogic ethics would do well to consider the semantic environment. Again, communication grows out of the environment, and those who wish to attend to the Other should think about the environmental conditions that allow for listening.

Chapter 7: Loving Resistance: A Philosophy of Communication in the Age of Technopoly

The chapters preceding this one worked collectively to articulate Neil Postman's loving resistance fighter into a more complete rhetorical and philosophical picture by writing it into existence. Certainly, I cannot claim the idea of the loving resistance fighter as my own; the loving resistance fighter, as a concept, belongs to Postman. Through writing, however, this project moves the loving resistance fighter beyond the realm of *Technopoly* (1992) the text and into the realm of technopoly the culture. Writing the loving resistance fighter into existence included identifying the intellectual and rhetorical roots of loving resistance as it related to Postman's scholarly project. In order for the loving resistance fighter to have value beyond Postman's scholarly project, this project elucidated the why, what, and who of loving resistance to form the narrative ground of the loving resistance fighter. In doing this, Loving resistance becomes meaningful in our everyday communicative practices in responding to the demands of technopoly and the secular trinity of progress, efficiency, and individual autonomy. This chapter concedes that the loving resistance fighter deserves more clarification and that this project cannot do complete justice to Postman's original idea. Despite this limitation, the idea of the loving resistance fighter has implications to our understanding of media ecology, philosophy of communication, rhetoric, and communication/media pedagogy.

Introduction

For me, closing a project on the loving resistance fighter carries extra weight. I find myself in a position similar to the position Neil Postman found himself at the end of *Technopoly* (1992). I opened this project with the following lines from the final chapter of *Technopoly*: "Anyone who practices the art of cultural criticism must endure being asked, What is the solution to the problems you describe" (1992, p. 181). My position is similar to Postman's position, but it

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is not exactly the same. This project does not operate as a form of cultural criticism. While I have not mentioned this term yet, philosophical hermeneutics and its orientation toward interpretation inspired much of this project. In writing loving resistance and the loving resistance fighter into existence, this project places *Technopoly* in dialogue with the historical moment of the secular trinity that undergirds the tyranny of individualism. . Because this project meets the text *Technopoly* with the historical moment, it owes more to hermeneutics and interpretation (see Gadamer 1975/2013; Arnett & Holba, 2012, p. 85) than it does pure rhetorical and cultural criticism. I place scrutiny on no object or artifact; I simply worked to extrapolate meaning from the text and offer that meaning to the historical moment in an effort to create a new, productive understanding of our current moment. My goal in the project was not to problematize a text. Consequently, I have no solutions to offer because this is a work of criticism. Both Postman and I, however, have to contend with the question, Where do we go from here? Postman offered a solution in the loving resistance fighter. Postman concluded his criticism with an idea that, at least in my opinion, was worthy of exploring. This is why I feel the extra weight in closing this project. I am not sure the ideas forwarded in this final chapter deserve the same type of attention and care. However, there are some implications of my interpretation that are worth considering for future scholars interested in media ecology and beyond. Hopefully, these implications offer a path forward but, at the same time, might lead one to go "nowhere, correctly" (Arnett, 2010, p. 222).

Therefore, this concluding chapter offers no central claim. Instead, I offer potential directions for scholars interested in furthering the idea of loving resistance and the loving resistance fighter. Before offering those directions, I will, first, offer a final summary of this project and my interpretation of loving resistance. Second, I acknowledge the potential

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limitations of my interpretation of loving resistance. Each limitation offers an opportunity for future expansion—or even contraction—of Postman's original idea. Third, I will walk loving resistance into various scholarly conversations and practices pertinent to media ecology, philosophy of communication, rhetoric, and communication/media pedagogy. Finally, I conclude this chapter and project with one final plea for loving resistance in an age of technopoly.

Summary of Project

This project worked to establish loving resistance as a philosophy of communication. Loving resistance works as a philosophy of communication that helps communicators navigate the age of technopoly and the secular trinity of progress, efficiency, and individual autonomy. Technopoly, as articulated by Neil Postman (1992), is a "totalitarian" culture in which technology and technical thinking dominate all aspects of human life (p. 48). *Technopoly* (1992), as a text illustrates the deleterious impact of technology and technical thinking on human capacities, culture, traditions, and institutions. As a potential remedy to the problem of technopoly, Postman proposed and developed the "loving resistance fighter" (p. 182). Postman devoted very little space to the idea of the loving resistance fighter, and media ecology and communication scholarship has done little to develop this idea. Consequently, this project sought to fill out the space of loving resistance by offering and articulating the narrative ground of loving resistance. In Chapter 1, I established where *Technopoly* and loving resistance fits within Postman's body of work. Loving resistance exists as part of Postman's work on technology, language, and educational philosophy. In Chapter 2, I began to connect loving resistance to the philosophy of communication by offering the why of loving resistance. Utilizing the work of Kenneth Burke, loving resistance becomes rational only when one accepts the scene of technopoly. Why engage in loving resistance? The scene of technopoly demands it. In Chapter 3,

I explored the heart of loving resistance. What does loving resistance include? Through interpretation and exegesis, I found that loving resistance fits within the parameters of philosophy of communication because loving resistance commits to the unity of contraries, the postmodern condition, language, narrative, and common sense. Loving resistance also struggles with and against the secular trinity of progress, efficiency, and individual autonomy. In the next three chapters, I contend with the who of loving resistance. I invoke three individuals as loving resistance fighters who help establish the narrative ground to resist technopoly and the secular trinity. In Chapter 4, I discussed the ways poet and author Wendell Berry helps us to think through the problems created by our commitment to progress. Berry's life and work teaches us that loving resistance requires a return to older ecosystems to keep from being dazzled by the promise of progress. In Chapter 5, I discussed the ways journalist and biographer Robert Caro helps us to think through the problems created by our commitment to efficiency. Caro's commitment to narrative, work, and professionalism reminds us of our sense of place that became lost in the age of technopoly. In Chapter 6, I discussed the ways educator and activist Myles Horton helps us to understand how loving resistance can resist the pull of individual autonomy. Specifically, Horton's educational philosophy illuminates the importance of the print medium, community, faith in others, and the semantic environment. The why, what, and who of loving resistance offered in the chapters of the project illustrate how loving resistance, as a philosophy of communication, can bring about meaningful practices. The narrative grounding for these practices illustrate how one can find meaning outside the demands of technopoly and the secular trinity.

Limitations of This Interpretation and Future Directions

As he concluded his discussion of the loving resistance fighters, Postman (1992) wrote, "I can say no more than this, for each person must decide how to enact these ideas" (p. 185). Postman believed he could say all he could say on the subject of technology and what we can individually do to respond to technology and technopoly. This project and its attempt to write loving resistance into existence operates as an attempt to enact and support the ideas that Postman outlined. Just like Postman, I can only say so much on this subject, but I must also admit where my description and interpretation might fall short. In particular, my mapping of loving resistance lacked definitional precision and failed to interrogate the violence lurking behind the term fighter. The project unfortunately only focuses on the narrative ground provided by three white men. As such, their narratives begin with privileges to which others might not have access. This project might have ignored some of the tools of analysis inherent to media ecology that would have given greater attention to the environmental concerns germane to loving resistance, but I believe this limitation creates an opportunity for future scholarship on the loving resistance fighter.

Defining Terms

As stated previously in the project, the notion of *in medias res* remains central to both media ecology and our engagement with the culture of technopoly. We find ourselves in the midst of a media environment and the culture of technopoly. Consequently, when we find ourselves *in medias res*, it becomes harder to see the larger picture. Although I argued for moving oneself out of the current environment, I, too, am guilty of not seeing my own work as clearly as possible. With the clarity of hindsight, I see that I use the term *loving resistance* interchangeably with *loving resistance fighter*. This move begs the questions: does one need to be a *fighter* to engage in loving resistance? Does the project emphasize the idea of loving

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resistance, or does the project emphasize the idea of a resistance fighter who fights with the notion of love in mind?

Earlier, I mentioned that the notion of a resistance fighter conjures notions of perhaps a member of French resistance fighter working covertly against the occupying Nazi force. However, it strains credulity to suggest that those resistance fighters were not motivated by the idea of love, the love of a country and its people. In this sense, it becomes difficult to separate the notion of loving resistance from the idea of a loving resistance fighter. All resistance fighters might be moved by a sense of obligation and love. Separating out the fighter from loving resistance becomes difficult.

At the same time, the term *fighter* might be inherently problematic. If we are to take Alfred Korzybski's ideas on neuro-semantic reactions seriously (and Postman certainly took them seriously), then we might consider some of the reactions inherent to the term fighter. The term neuro-semantic refers to our habitual reactions and responses to the words and things we encounter (Presby Kodish, 1998). Korzybski and general semantics looks to re-pattern and reshape our reactions to words and things by giving attention to the process of abstraction (Pace, 2017). General semantics encourages the notion of delayed reactions (Presby Kodish, 1998). Despite the hope offered by general semantics in encouraging us to delay our reaction, there, nevertheless, exists a connection between the term *fighter* and violence. The invocation of a resistance fighter in the term loving resistance fighter might read as an advocacy of violence. Even though Postman does not advocate for a Luddite-like response to technopoly that permits violence against machines and personal property, violence lurks behind the term fighter. At the risk of sounding hyperbolic, one need not look beyond the actions of Theodore Kaczynski, the Unabomber. Opposition to technology and thinking informed by technology can lead to violence.

Kaczynski's "Industrial Society and Its Future", the so-called Unabomber Manifesto, illustrates the dangers of writing about the nefariousness of technology. One can go too far and run the risk of violent opposition to technological and technocratic forces. Put simply, there is a danger in taking ideas to their extreme, and does the *fighter* in loving resistance fighter invite this extremism? Consequently, I might have benefited from defining my terms more carefully and separating the notion of loving resistance from the idea of the loving resistance fighter, or I might have engaged in a more rigorous examination of the idea of a fighter. Future scholarship on the loving resistance fighter would do well to consider the implications of Postman's use of the word *fighter* in resisting technopoly.

As I have indicated previously, this project, in writing about loving resistance and the loving resistance fighter, attempts to map the territory of Postman's concepts. Mapping the territory, in the parlance of general semantics, means utilizing words to describe what is called the extensional world (Hayakawa, 1972, p. 29). The extensional world consists of the territory, the physical world in which we find ourselves. A word, like chair, has a clearer extensional referent than loving resistance or loving resistance fighter. I can even clarify my meaning by referring to the black desk chair in my office. I have three chairs in my office, and only one chair is black and positioned at my desk. My meaning in referring to the chair is quite clear. The terms loving resistance and loving resistance fighter map an extensional world as well, and this project sought to map loving resistance through an examination of the why, what, and who of loving resistance. However, the terms loving resistance and loving resistance fighter sit much higher on what Hayakawa (1972) calls the ladder of abstraction (p. 153). A chair is a form of property, and I could easily say that I have property in my office. The word property, unlike chair, is far more abstract because the term property removes nearly all the characteristics that one finds in the

word chair (Hayakawa, 1972, p. 153). The creation and my use of the terms loving resistance and loving resistance fighter preceded the extensional world of loving resistance and loving resistance fighter. At best, the actions of Wendell Berry, Robert Caro, and Myles Horton may function as operational definitions of loving resistance and loving resistance fighter. Hayakawa suggests that we can reduce the problems of abstraction if we focus less on defining terms and work to create operational definitions (1972, pp. 156-157). While Berry, Caro, and Horton help us to respond to technopoly and the secular trinity, perhaps there are better ways to reduce their acts into a unifying term not reliant on the idea of a fighter. Is there a better and perhaps less abstract metonym than loving resistance fighter?

When Postman first committed the idea of media ecology to print in "The Reformed English Curriculum" (1970) over half a century ago, he made clear that media ecology did not operate as a subject like English (p. 163). Instead, Postman (1970) wrote, "Media ecology is a field of inquiry. Fields of inquiry imply the active pursuit of knowledge. Discoveries. Explorations. Uncertainty. Change. New questions. New methods New terms. New definitions" (p. 163). I do not wish to quarrel as to whether media ecology operates as a field of inquiry, discipline, tradition, approach. Instead, what is more important is Postman's framing of media ecology as a field of inquiry that commits itself to *knowledge* in the study of media as environments. Those committed to the idea of media ecology can and must recognize that our work should deal with the theoretical issues inherent to any scholarly pursuit. Media ecology as a scholarly pursuit recognizes that media ecology qua media ecology will change. The term "loving resistance fighter" operates as a term that alters our understanding of how we might respond to technopoly. This term brought about many new questions for me as I interpreted Postman's articulation. This project might bring about new ways of thinking about resistance to

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technopoly. My conflation of loving resistance and loving resistance fighter, the inherent problems with the term fighter, and the lack of clear extensional objects of loving resistance should create new questions and concerns for those interested in media ecology.

Three White Males

This project offers the narrative ground of loving resistance by showcasing three loving resistance fighters who help us to respond to the problems inherent to technopoly and the secular trinity. I offered three white, straight, cisgender men born in the United States. The narrative ground provided by Wendell Berry, Robert Caro, and Myles Horton's rests, in some measure, on their position as white, straight, cisgender men born in the United States. Because of this, I must recognize that the positions of these loving resistance fighters taint or, at the very least, skew their narrative ground. Their social locations and the local knowledge produced by those locations (Harding, 1991, p.58) most certainly shaped their interaction with technology and with others. In the same way that we cannot separate the knowledge from the knower, we cannot divorce their narratives from the ground of their social location. .

The narratives of Berry, Caro, and Horton offer what Fisher (1984) called "'good reasons'" (p. 7) for distancing oneself from technology and refusing progress, efficiency, and individual autonomy. In his discussion of narratives and the narrative paradigm, Fisher (1984) also notes that "the production and practice of good reasons is ruled by matters of history, biography, culture, and character" (p. 7). Their narrative ground remains important to this project, but their narrative ground is not totalizing. Again, this concept of a non-totalizing narrative goes back to the notion of Lyotard (1984), and the petite narrative. Their good reasons, while helping us to navigate technopoly and the secular trinity, may only provide good reasons for some. Technopoly operates as a totalizing narrative. The narratives of Berry, Caro, and

Horton, by resisting technopoly, immediately serve as a rejection of totalizing narratives. Recognizing that Berry, Caro, and Horton's narrative are not totalizing creates space for the development of other narratives of loving resistance.

As noted elsewhere in this project, Strate (2017b) contends that analysis of media offers the center of the tradition of media ecology. Scholars working within the tradition of media ecology, since they inherently view media as environments, place media or a specific medium at the center of examination and analysis. Admittedly, this would move other concerns to the background. In their introduction to *Explorations in Media Ecology*'s special issue on gender and media ecology, Julia M. Hildebrand and Julia C. Richmond (2021) argue that "questions of gender along with race, ethnicity, class, age, disability, and so on matter in the socio-historical study of technology and its impact on us" (p. 120). Media ecology, if it is to follow Postman's lead and continually ask new questions about our relationship with media and technology, has to bring forward these concerns, and I applaud Hildebrand, Richmond, and the editorial board of *Explorations in Media Ecology* for bringing gender closer to the to the center of the conversation.

Following this line of scholarship articulated by Hildebrand and Richmond, those interested in the nexus of media ecology and underrepresented groups—and I include myself as someone who is interested in this nexus—might consider how to expand Postman's idea of the loving resistance fighter to make loving resistance accessible to everyone. Future media ecology scholarship interested in loving resistance, while keeping media at its center, should craft narratives that consider the issues Hildebrand and Richmond identify. Although technopoly impacts everyone in disparate ways, it still impacts everyone. Media ecology, if it is to keep its ethical and liberatory telos, must construct the narrative ground for loving resistance that

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provides good reasons for everyone to resist. Loving resistance and the practice of media ecology demands that we create more narratives grounding in social locations not mentioned in this project.

Identifying Environments of Resistanc

Postman framed the loving resistance fighter as an "individual response" that one could engage regardless of what "the culture is doing" (1992, p. 182). Certainly, given the centrality of Postman to media ecology and media ecology scholarship, we can think of the loving resistance fighter as part of media ecology scholarship. As Strate (2006) notes, much of media ecology scholarship functions as a pattern of citation centered on Postman, McLuhan, and Ong. Anton (2011) identified Postman as one of the central figures in media ecology scholarship and the person most responsible for popularizing the term media ecology. Because Postman's work sparked this project, the project becames part of the media ecology scholarship. However, this does not mean that I have taken an environmental approach in writing about the loving resistance fighter future research might consider the environmental factors that allow loving resistance to germinate and grow.

The study of media as environments recognizes that media becomes culture. Postman admits this in technopoly when he argues that a technopoly occurs when technology becomes the culture. I admitted this in Chapter 2 when developing the argument that the culture of technology becomes the scene shaping all action. Loving resistance focuses on what we can do despite what the larger culture does. This does not make the loving resistance fighter inherently ecological or environmental. Yes, Wendell Berry teaches us the importance of returning to the ecosystem of print. Robert Caro helps us to think about a sense of place, and Myles Horton draws our attention to the semantic environment. However, future research might consider the ecological

consequences of such moves. Does returning to the ecosystem of print in the classroom cut off other values? Can the ecosystem of print create a rational and sane semantic environment? What is the interrelationship between Horton's circle of learning and the print medium? Do we need a medium like Horton's circle of learners to—using McLuhan's (2003) terms—cool off the environment of print? Can we find balance with these narratives? These are all ecological questions that deserve consideration.

Moreover, much of media ecology scholarship focuses on specific tools one can use to elucidate the environmental consequences of media (Strate, 2017b, p. 211). Much of McLuhan's career focused on the construction and deployment of tool (probes) to better understand media; Terrence Gordon (2010) outlines many of these, and McLuhan's son Eric continued his father's work in constructing and articulating tools for media analysis in *Laws of Media* (1988) and *Theories of Communication* (2011). Other scholars within the tradition of media ecology, such as Ong, Innis, Havelock, Eisenstein, and Mumford, rely on historical analysis and examination to reveal the environmental consequences of media. My current project does not take such an approach. Although I give attention to the historical moment of technopoly and postmodernity, this project relies more on rhetoric, narrative construction, and interpretation. While constructing narratives about the nature of media is an appropriate approach to media ecology scholarship (Postman, 1988a), the narratives of media ecology scholarship—I would think—should focus on the environmental consequences of media. Since this project moved in the direction of who is media ecology to set up the narrative ground for loving resistance, narrative about specific media faded into the background. Therefore, scholars interested in continuing the study of loving resistance and the loving resistance fighter might consider how they might move narratives about media into the foreground of their study. On the other hand, those working in media ecology,

rhetoric, and philosophy of communication might ask whether loving resistance belongs solely within the realm of media ecology. Postman announced the loving resistance fighter, but his announcement may not make the idea inherently ecological. Those wishing to take loving resistance forward should considered these ideas.

Moving Forward: Loving Resistance in the Communication Discipline

In this section, I consider how this project, as a whole, contributes to various scholarly conversations within the field of communication. My articulation of loving resistance and the loving resistance fighter has implications for the traditions of media ecology and philosophy of communication. Loving resistance connects to rhetoric and rhetorical theory helps us to think through the issues of loving resistance. In particular, the rhetorical appeals of loving resistance in relation to other contemporary rhetorics. Finally, I will discuss how this project informs communication and media pedagogy. The rhetoric of technology will find its way into the communication classroom, and loving resistance provides the resources to contend with this rhetoric.

Loving Resistance in Media Ecology

Neil Postman, as Corey Anton (2011) noted, was "the most vocal proponent of the actual expression of 'media ecology'" (pp. 84-85). Even though communication theory textbooks begin their introduction to media ecology with a discussion of Marshall McLuhan, Neil Postman's work—more than any other scholar within the tradition of media ecology preceding him—is synonymous with media ecology. Therefore, my discussion of the loving resistance fighter does not just have implications for media ecology, but it also has implications for how we might think of Neil Postman's entire body of work. I mentioned this earlier, but Anton also called Postman

"the most pessimistic" of the three central media ecology scholars of McLuhan, Ong, and

Postman[6]. I believe this project offers a direct rebuttal of this claim of pessimism.

A careful consideration of the narrative grounding of loving resistance reveals elements

of hope. Given what media ecology has revealed about the impact of technology on the human

condition, optimism runs the risk of foolishness to the point of becoming Pollyannaish. If one

values the traditions that once held the power of technology at bay, then there is a reason to be

pessimistic. One of those traditions, religion, finds itself in dire straits. In 2021, only forty-seven

percent of Americans claimed membership to a mosque, synagogue, or church, and the

percentage was around seventy percent at the time of the publication of *Technopoly* (Jones,

2021). 2021 marked the first time that membership in religious organizations fell below fifty

percent (Jones, 2021). If one claims that Postman is pessimistic, we can see that pessimism is not

the same thing as irrational. If anything, Postman's pessimism expressed in *Technopoly* seems

entirely warranted and alarmingly prescient[7]. In addition, pessimism is not a concession. Just

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[6] In Chapter 1, I discussed the influence of Jacques Ellul's *The Technological Society* (1964) on

Postman. One could reasonably argue that if you take into account *all* scholars associated with

the tradition of media ecology Ellul could be considered the most pessimistic. However, calling

Ellul pessimistic also ignore the Christian narrative of hope that informed much of his body of

work.

[7] The accuracy of Postman's predictions and forecast for the future speaks to the nature of media

ecology and its association with technological determinism. Media ecology can predict future

events because technology is, in some ways, deterministic. Technology is deterministic, unless

human culture counteracts technology. The perspective that technology is deterministic unless

because one might be pessimistic does not mean that one believes that all is lost. Loving

resistance with the narrative grounding offered by Berry, Caro, and Horton reveals that there are

resources that can respond to the environment and culture of technopoly. Again, Berry, Caro, and

Horton do not practice nostalgia, pining for a past that never existed; instead, they offer the

resources to help us to respond productively to technopoly and the tyranny of the secular trinity.

By placing Postman's idea with these specific loving resistance fighters, we find a message of

hope, and I believe this demands a reconsideration of Neil Postman's outlook and the outlook of

media ecology as a whole.

Loving resistance also offers a set of practices for the communication ethic for media

ecology. For some within the tradition of media ecology, the idea of moral judgment and ethics

feels antithetical to media ecology, particularly the work of Marshall McLuhan (Postman, 2006;

Strate, 2020). Those following the Postman's lead in media ecology, ethical concerns become

central to media ecology scholarship. Postman (2006) argued that media ecology properly fits

within the humanities, and we should use media ecology to consider whether a given technology

improves or hinders the human condition (p. 68). Postman (2006) claimed that a central question

of media ecology is, "To what extent do new media enhance or diminish our moral sense, our

capacity for goodness" (p. 67). Under Postman's view, media ecology constitutes what Arnett

(2011) calls a communication ethic. Arnett (2011) writes, "A communication ethic functions as a

gestalt involving the interplay of narrative background and foreground communicative practices"

(p.46). In this sense, media ecology's narrative is that one should study media guided by the

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there is humans intervention invokes the soft determinism inherent to media ecology mentioned

by Strate (2017b, p. 16).

narrative that media can make us better or worse. The orientation that Postman offers functions as the background. If media—and technology/technopoly—make us worse, then we must engage in the practice of loving resistance. Certainly, individual studies grounded in media ecology can consider whether a given technology improves or worsens our condition. That type of scholarship is one set of practices in the foreground of the gestalt of media ecology. Loving resistance forms another set of practices. We can use Berry's return to print, Caro's sense of place, and Horton's emphasis on the semantic environment to guide our practices as we engage in loving resistance. We can do this while keeping in mind that new media and technology can make us worse. If we take a neutral stance toward technology and media, loving resistance becomes incomprehensible. Media ecology informed by Postman would do well to think of the specific practices that can contribute to our understanding of loving resistance.

Loving Resistance in the Philosophy of Communication

Writing loving resistance into existence functions as a work in the philosophy of communication. Again, Arnett and Holba (2012) articulate philosophy of communication as "discourse that houses a sense of meaning and offers interpretive frameworks for understanding" (p. 9). Through this project we gain a sense of loving resistance and the loving resistance fighter as a philosophy of communication. My articulation of loving resistance illustrates the ways we can find meaning in the culture of technopoly and in the age of the "tyranny of individualism" (Arnett, Fritz, & Holba, 2007, p. 121). Loving resistance means recognizing that we cannot escape technology and that we certainly cannot destroy the technological environment. However, we can find meaning by distancing ourselves from technology. Once we distance ourselves from technology, it opens the possibility to refuse the goods of the moderate Enlightenment. Loving

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resistance can appreciate technology, but it does not view the progress, efficiency, and individual autonomy embedded in technology and technological thinking as beneficial to our condition.

Consequently, loving resistance offers the space to seek out and create new goods or retrieve old ones that have become lost in the technolopical and technological landscape. Wendell Berry reminds us that there is good in ignorance, good in not acting, and good in returning to ecosystems of the past—if only for a moment. Robert Caro reminds us that there is good in resisting the bureaucratic demands of technopoly, good in working slowly, good in maintaining professionalism, and good in crafting narratives through the print medium that give us a clear and specific sense of place. Myles Horton reminds us that there is good in having a mind cultivated by the print medium, good in religious narratives, good in our co-presence with our fellow human beings, and good in adult education. These goods found in the narratives of Berry, Caro, and Horton give communicators a sense of meaning as they interact with others and technology. Their narratives help us to understand that there is something other than techopoly, something other than progress, efficiency, and individual autonomy.

Pat Arneson's (2014) *Communicative Engagement and Social Engagement* stands as a work of philosophy of communication *par excellence*. In this text, Arneson discusses "how communicative engagement can liberate persons from what are perceived as static customs, practices, and laws" (2014, p. 37). Essentially, communicative engagement, as a philosophy of communication, offers meaning and interpretive possibilities in a moment when persons become shunted by the practices of the historical moment. While I would never claim that this project rises to the level of Arneson's philosophy of communication that manifests the notion of communicative engagement, I would tentatively claim that loving resistance offers an example of a philosophy of communication that responds to the demands of the historical moment, the

moment of technopoly and the faith in the secular trinity. Loving resistance and communicative engagement operate in a similar manner. They both are responses that open up possibilities denied to persons within a given historical moment. My hope is that others interested in the philosophy of communication will consider loving resistance as a discourse worth exploring and practicing, like communicative engagement or dialogic civility (Arnett & Arneson, 1999).

Loving Resistance and Rhetoric

Chapter 2 grappled with the rhetorical appeals within *Technopoly*. As I demonstrated in that chapter, Postman's work possesses rhetorical qualities, and Postman as rhetor constructed a scene-act ratio that demands loving resistance as an appropriate act within the scene of technopoly. At the end of that chapter, I called for more analysis of the rhetoric of media ecology. Charges that media ecology functions as an exercise in technological determinism might arise from media ecology's attention to the notion of scene within its scholarship. Environment might function rhetorically as a scene that shapes all other considerations. I believe this project revealed the need for more scholarly attention on the rhetoricity of media ecology. The rhetoric of technology might also consider the rhetoric of media ecology. An honest look at media ecology's rhetorical qualities will strengthen the tradition of media ecology. If media ecology concerns itself with narration and narrative construction about media (Postman, 1988a), then bringing rhetoric into conversation with media ecology makes sense. Rhetoric stands as one of the major scholarly traditions within the field of communication (Craig, 1999). In discussing media ecology's relationship to the field of communication, Strate (2017b) contends that media ecology "can acknowledge a significant amount of common ground between the two fields, as well as the distinct differences" (p. 17). This project illustrates the potential benefit of putting media ecology with the tradition of rhetoric.

In addition, the loving resistance fighter, as an act and idea, also functions rhetorically as a response to continued faith in technology. Whether or not one chooses to accept Postman's label of technopoly to describe our current cultural moment, the humanization of machines is here. The rhetoric and philosophy of technology now gives serious credence to the notion of giving machines and robots rights similar to the rights given to humans (see Gunkel, 2018). We also see the rise of posthumanism and transhumanism; inherent to the belief in post and transhumanism is that "we are increasingly merging with our technologies and evolving into cyborgs" (Wachs & Schaff, 2020, p. 6). The movement to humanize machines and draw us closer to technology illustrates just another instance in which technologies, as Postman claims, "bid to *become* culture" (1992, p. 28, emphasis in original). Even though robot rights and merging with technology have philosophical justifications, those who advocate on behalf of technology—even if they hope for detached philosophical analysis—still make a rhetorical turn (Schrag, 1986). There is rhetoricity in these movements and calls to action. Wachs and Schaff (2020) claim, "[B]oth posthumanism and transhumanism function rhetorically as scientific religions" in that they call for technological rapture (p 7). With this context in mind, I contend that loving resistance and the loving resistance offers a rhetorical plea to move away from these secular faiths and movements.

I point to the rise of posthumanism and transhumanism to illustrate the rhetorical situation and exigencies that demand the need for the rhetoric of loving resistance. Here, I rely on the work of Lloyd Bitzer (1968). For Bitzer, rhetoric emerges "as a response to situation, in the same sense that an answer comes into existence in response to a question, or a solution in response to a problem" (1968, p. 5). Again, I go back to the idea of *in medias res*, we find ourselves in the midst of technopoly. The situation of technopoly poses a question, a rhetorical

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demand. The rise of post and transhumanism offers one answer to this question. The rhetorical appeal of post and transhumanism is that our savior has come. Under this view of technopoly, technology has finally reached the point that will allow us to overcome all of our pain and discomfort, so we must do all we can to bring it closer. Pain, discomfort, and death are exigencies—Bitzer (1968) writes, "Any *exigence* is an imperfection marked by urgency; it is a defect, an obstacle, or something waiting to be done, a thing which is other than it should be" (p. 6). Since technology has moved us away from pain, discomfort, and death, we must—according to the posthumanist perspective—embrace technology. Loving resistance, on the other hand, views the situation differently. The exigency is not pain, discomfort, or death. These aspects of life are inevitable. Instead, the real exigency is the loss of our capacities that make us human.

In *Team Human*, Douglas Rushkoff (2019) explains the ways in which technology and artificial intelligence have undermined our human relations. Ruskoff creates and deploys the metaphor Team Human to rally support against the forces of technology that drain our human capacities, institutions, and traditions. Rushkoff claims that we must work together, and he closes *Team Human* with the following passage, "It's time for us to rise to the occasion of our own humanity. We are not perfect, by any means. But we are not alone. We are Team Human [...] Find the others" (Rushkoff, 2019, p. 216). Loving resistance, then, becomes the rhetorical call for Team Human. If we are to find others and build Team Human as a response to the technological environment the rhetoric of the loving resistance fighter becomes necessary. It points to the exigency that has led to our current situation. The forces of technopoly moved us to this state, and the resources and traditions embedded in loving resistance can move us in a different direction.

This is not to say that loving resistance and the loving resistance fighter *must* advocate for a particular faith. Instead, loving resistance and the loving resistance fighter offer the rhetorical counterargument to technopoly. The counterargument *can* include an appeal to faith, but, as I have hopefully illustrated throughout this project, loving resistance offers many appeals against the faith in technology and technopoly. Certainly, rhetorical scholarship, media ecology, and the philosophy of communication would do well to explore the parameters and suasive characteristics of loving resistance's counterargument. However, for communication educators the idea of loving resistance as a counterargument has immediate, pragmatic consequences for what we do.

Loving Resistance in Communication and Media Pedagogy

My use of the term counterargument deliberately invokes the thermostatic view articulated in Postman's *Teaching as a Conserving Activity* (1979). Media ecology, like all ecologies, maintains an interest in balance. I live along the Ohio River, and in the Ohio River Valley near my home, there is an invasive plant species, a vine called kudzu. Kudzu vines will grow over trees and other flora, and as those vines grow and form leaves over the trees that block sunlight from ever reaching the trees. Essentially, kudzu starves the other plants by blocking sunlight. Kudzu vines, in and of themselves, are not problematic but become troublesome when they enter the wrong environment. Kudzu qua kudzu is not bad. Kudzu in the Ohio River Valley throws the ecosystem out of balance. Since Postman takes an ecological point of view, he concerns himself with what education does in relation to other systems in our culture. To keep cultural systems sustainable, Postman contends that there must be balance. For Postman, balance comes through counterargument. Given the importance of the idea of the counterargument to loving resistance and pedagogy, I feel compelled to quote Postman at length. He writes:

It is also the idea expressed by the process of a dialectic, both in the lucid way Socrates

practiced it and the opaque way Hegel explained it. Intellectual and cultural advance is

made not through argument but through argument and counterargument. For the

counterargument makes the deficiencies of the argument visible and makes improvement

and synthesis possible. Without the counterargument there is no way to govern error,

excess, or distortion; there is nothing for an argument to measure itself against or limit

itself by. (Postman, 1979, p. 19).

Counterargument provides balance. Like kudzu, technology qua technology is neither bad nor

good. However, when technology comes into areas that it does not belong, it starves out all other

possibilities. Because technology has had so many successes in making our life more

comfortable, we cannot always see technology's deficiencies. Loving resistance provides a

counterargument. It provides balance. The metaphor of the thermostat postulates that education

should regulate through counterargument in the same way that a thermostat regulates the

temperature of the room, if the room gets too hot or too cold. If we view education as a

thermostatic activity, we can let communication and media education release the

counterargument of loving resistance.

In crafting and presenting Wendell Berry's loving resistance to progress, Robert Caro's

loving resistance to efficiency, and Myles Horton's loving resistance to individual autonomy, I

drew specific implications to communication and media pedagogy. Here, I would draw out a

more comprehensive implication of loving resistance to communication and media pedagogy.

Media and communication technology has a place in almost all contexts of communication

(intrapersonal, interpersonal, group, organizational, public, mass/mediated, and cultural) and in

all traditions of communication scholarship outlined by Craig (1999). Media and communication

technology's entry into these contexts and areas of scholarship become inevitable. As media and communication technology enter these areas, they build arguments on their own behalf. The rhetoric of technology comes with the technology. *Communication and media pedagogy would be well served in invoking loving resistance to provide the counterargument.* One need not invoke loving resistance, Berry, Caro, or Horton by name, but with the narrative grounding of loving resistance, we can take their practices and their lessons into the communication classroom.

As I move to the end of this project, I should note that I have mostly ignored the second half of the chapter "The Loving Resistance Fighter." In the second half of "The Loving Resistance Fighter", Postman declares that education and schools must respond to technopoly, not just individuals. Postman essentially invokes his own idea about the counterargument that I invoked. Postman advocates for an "education as an excellent corrective to the antihistorical, information-saturated, technology-loving character of Technopoly" (1992, p. 189). Postman advocates for teaching histories of each discipline and instruction in general semantics (1992, pp. 190-197). I agree with both proposals. Postman (1992) also advocates for keeping contemporary artistic expression out of the classroom (p. 196) with a distinct emphasis on classical artistic expression (p. 199). I cannot concur with this type of exclusion and emphasis, as the western canon has excluded important voices for some time. A corrective to this exclusion of voices is needed.

However, the larger issue with this proposal is that Postman focuses on the content of education, not the medium of education. For loving resistance to work as a counterargument, we must first think of the environments communication educators can create in the classroom. In this sense, I believe my construction of the narrative ground of loving resistance proves fruitful

to communication and media pedagogy. Focusing on history, language, and classical expression will not be productive, if the classroom medium utilizes technologies—both visible and invisible—that emphasize progress, efficiency, and individual autonomy. Consequently, we must look to a form of loving resistance that emphasizes the print medium, through both writing and reading. The ecosystem of print, as I have hopefully demonstrated, can help us to learn how to craft coherent narratives and learn to be in space with others. If we are guided by Berry, Caro, and Horton and practice loving resistance in setting up the classroom medium, we create the space to *find the others and help the others find each other to resist the forces of technopoly*. We create the space for Team Human.

One Final Plea: Sustain Loving Resistance

This project cannot function and does not function as a coda on loving resistance and the loving resistance fighter. The exigency of technopoly and the scene it creates will remain. Technopoly will not disappear. To presume that technopoly will disappear means that I subscribe to the belief in progress. To think that this project would make a dent in the forces of technopoly would mean that I have faith in my own individual ability. To think that reading this work or even Neil Postman's work would make technopoly go away would mean that I have faith in efficient means. We will continue to contend with technopoly. The question is how will we contend with it. Loving resistance provides the resources to help us in the age of technopoly. It helps us to think through our relationship with technology and with others. We can think through this relationship by offering the counterargument to technopoly. While this counterargument might form into an elegy for technocracy, a culture trying to fend off technological forces in spaces where those forces do not belong, it is a counterargument nonetheless. My hope is that the readers of this project will explore the contours and counterarguments of loving resistance,

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continue to tell its story, and bring it into scholarly conversations and the communication

classroom. An idea, like loving resistance, is only as good as the community of scholars who

support and sustain the idea. I hope you, the reader, will.

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