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Retrieved on 17th May 2021 from hermetic.com
Lecture given at the Networking Conference Budapest.

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I don't even own a computer. Is there anybody else in here who doesn't own a computer? It's interesting to watch the net and to approach media ecology, and the internet, specifically from the point of view of what I do.

Which is essentially the study of the history of religions, or histories of religion. It is extremely obvious to me that the internet is a religious phenomenon. This may not have occured to everyone who is closer to it than I am. First of all, all technology can be analized according to religious principles. When I speak about religion, I am not speaking from the point of view of religion. In fact, I prefer to be an outsider there as well. However, in some points, unavoidably, I will express myself as if I were thinking from a religious point of view.

Please understand that I am not supplying any dogma or article of faith, I am simply trying to analize the phenomenon in a purely structural way and if that is useful for me in my own search for truth, maybe it's useful for you. Please accept what I have to say on that basis.

All technology is a religious phenomenon: Why?

Because unless you belong to the human condition, you cannot have technology. What is the human condition? What makes a human being different from an animal? I would say consciousness or selfconsciousness, perhaps. Not awareness though, we know that animals are aware, but what we don't know is whether they are conscious. And we certainly don't know whether they are self-conscious.

One of the symptoms of consciousness, or selfconsciousness, is technology and it is impossible, structurally or historically, to separate technology from consciousness when we try to imagine what it is to be human. As soon as we see in the archeological record evidence of a Simian or a similar creature that we could identify as human, then the only reason why we do so is because there are some broken stones next to the bones, that look like they may have been intended to be tools. What separates animals from humans is technology. From one point of view, that is religion. Because you cannot have technology unless you can extricate consciousness outside the body. If you cannot understand that consciousness is something which projects outward into the world, you cannot create the prothesis, the extension of the body, which is techology, be it a broken stone, or a computer.

Because there is this intimate relationship between technology and consciousness, technology itself is always threatening to take the place of religion. Technology is always becoming confused with religion the marxists used to call this reification. Not a bad word.

It means making an intuition a "thing," making it "thingy," or giving it "thinginess." If we want to talk about the Greek word techne, it would be useful to describe the whole range of prothesis of consciousness. But, if we want to talk about technology, then we are moving into different ground. Technology is techne plus logos in Greek. Techne, the technique or the mechanic principle plus the logos, or the word. If we are trying to find out what the first technology is, in the strict sense of the word, you would

have to answer that it is writing, which adds the mechanic to the word. Therefore, there is no techne, but technologia. Then we see the process of reification that works immediatly here. Writing itself defines words. Words do not define writing, but immediatly a paradoxical feedback comes up, where writing defines words and words define things. Logically, it should be the other way round, but we know that language is a double-edged sword. As a means of communication, language leaves a great deal to be desired.

One of the speakers yesterday, Heath (Bunting), I think it was, said that communication doesn't always communicate, and this is so clear. I don't know why this was a surprise. Everyone can understand this immediatly: a map is not a territory. As soon as you mistake the word 'Budapest' on the map for the city of Budapest, you are in deep trouble. You have got a cognitive problem. If instead of talking about Budapest, you want talk about love, or patriotism, or valour, or truth, or communication, or the net, or freedom, or any words like that, which have very few references in the world of thinginess, you have a problem. We reify those concepts and solidify them in writing, in sign systems. Then they influence consciousness as you grow up, as a child learning language. All of these signs are imprinted. Writing begins with pictures, than we have pictographs, pictographic writing like ancient Armenian, or Chinese, or Egyptian hieroglyphics. Then some of those signs are chosen to be phonemes. For example, a very common word in the indoeuropean language is the word for foot, which always sounds something like paw or pede or pedes. A picture of a foot becomes a P. If you turn that upside down, it is still like a P, and that P still looks like a foot. Even the alphabet, alphabetic writing, which is supposedly free of images, is not of free of all images.

When you move from the alphabet to binary writing, this is also not free of images. It is a very simple image system, black-white-yes-no, but it is still an image system. The computer is still a machine of inscription, it is still a writing machine, in fact for most of you it is just a glorified typewriter. There is going to be a grad-

ual process in the realm of technology of the reduction of the sign: from the complexity of a representational picture to the abstraction of a binary sign system which apparently no longer contains pictures, although we can see that the pictures are just more deeply buried.

The Greek word for symbol, symbolon, actually means, an object which is broken in half. That is why communication systems are not monodic or unitary, they are always dual or diadic. I prefer to say that all communications are diadic, it involves two-ness. There must be a speaker and a hearer, then these relations can be reversed. The breaking of the symbolon symbolizes the split in human consciousness itself. A split between the animal intimacy, which we can hypothesize as our Semian heritage, and the idea that consciousness and self are two different things. As soon as that split occurs we have a symbolic system at work, where one thing stands for another. The same holds true for all language systems, all musical systems, all dance systems, anything which can possibly communicate on any level whatsoever. These are all symbolic systems. Language is a symbolic system. All computer programs are symbolic systems.

It is important to remember that in any symbolic system this split, the doubling of consciousness, the hypothesis of consciousness which is actually prothesis, obtains something which is outside the body and which can act in the world. In the history of religion, this desire for lost intimacy, this desire to recapture unified consciousness, is the cause of yet a further split. We see the whole idea of sacrifice that is meant to heal this wound in the cosmic structure. Sacrifice appears very early in human religion, at least as early as agricultural systems in the Neolithic Age, if not sooner, and it is violent. Initially, it probably involves human sacrifice.

I see this as a violence of the sacred. Whatever is religious is also inherently violent, because it's based on the split. The split consciousness, the act of splitting is violent, and so the act of repairing the split is also violent. In fact, the word religion, "religio,"

else, is a spirituality OF the body FOR the body. A re enchantment of the natural. Re-enchantment means singing, music.

I am not proposing any kind of dialectical materialism or reductionism here. Actually, I am interested in a re-mytholization, in reenchantment, in magic, in action at a distance. I am interested in technology because it is magical, it is magic, it is action at a distance. What I want to see is this technology used to re-enchant nature, and finally, hopefully, to sacrifice the violence of the sacred.

in Latin, means to re-link, which is really the same as the word in Hindi "yo go" which means yoke, as the yoke which connects two oxen. Religion itself, at its very base, is about this relinking of consciousness. It is an attempt to overcome the split of consciousness and to unify what was doubled and make it one. This is a very violent process throughout human history, and it is not an accident that religions were associated with violence.

If we're going to talk about belief systems, then I include all belief systems under the group of religion, including ideology, then we are going to be talking about violence. There is no way out of it. The initial split of consciousness can also be seen as a split between nature and culture, and in between nature and culture comes an ambiguous, marginal space, which is neither nature nor culture. In all folklore and in all methodological systems we have this moment where the ocean of primordial chaos is separated from culture.
Eventually this split between culture and nature also applies to primitive systems like shamanism. The split became more and more severe, and instead of being layed on a horizontal level, with nature over here and culture over there, the whole thing moved on to a vertical axis, and culture and consciousness are now reified as heaven. Nature, what is left below, what is not saved, what is not taken up into heaven, is this body, this physical body, which can die. Nature is conscious of death, which is probably at the root of all consciousness, but consciousness of death by itself can only be negative.

Consciousness has to be turned, paradoxically, away from its original object, which is death, and focused on life, which is also death.

This is what fails to happen in most religions. Most religions are systems of death consciousness because they posit a radical split between body and spirit, but they are no longer upset about it. They are not interested in reconciling the body and the spirit anymore. They are interested in eliminating one of those factors, the body, and perpetuating the other, the spirit, or mind or perhaps informa-

tion. So you have spirit and heaven at the top and nature, body and earth at the bottom. It becomes associated with the feminine; the catatonic, the chaotic, the uncultured, the uncultivated. It is associated with tribal societies, with hunting and gathering, with everything primitive, with everything despicable. Mind or spirit, which is now separated from the body, is associated with maleness; with power, with structure, with culture, with civilisation, and with religion itself. What is in between is now only a technology of the sacred, the actual workings of religion itself. The ritual, the sacrifice, the priesthood, which is now a completely privileged closed-off class; you now have class structure.

We now have the pyramidal structure, we now also have cyberspace. We have the concept of the virtual. Heaven or paradise, the mind principle, separated from the body, becomes cyberspace.

Cyberspace is a version, paradoxical, or even a parody, of heaven. It's a place where your body is not present, but your consciousness is. It is a place of immortality, of not being mortal, of having overcome death. There is a view that cyberspace is a salvational reality, that it saves us from our crude shitfilled rotting bodies, and that we will transcend into an angelic sphere of pure data where we will download consciousness and never die. If you have read William Gibson, the image is very clear: You have the hacker, who is jacked in, literally jacked into the computer. The body is rotting, but the cyberpersona is clearly immortal.

Actually, Gibson is heavily ironic about this. The problem is that what we have been promised is transcendence through technomediation. It is a false transcendence. Formerly, in religion we said that God, who has been stripped of all material, becoming, and is now pure, being a transcended God. It's actually not interrelating with the material world. If we have a god, as in some forms of paganism, that has a material nature, the god is a rebirth. We will call that an emminent form of deity, as opposed to transcendent. What we are are being offered in the net is not emminence, not a true

that mediation, you can excaberate to a point where it becomes alienation, where you are actually violently separated or split from other people.

Mediation which becomes alienation is then reproduced in the media, so the television, newspapers, the internet, all forms of communication, as a media, in the usual sense of that word, simply increase alienation, and of course, wherever advertising comes in, it is very easy to see how this happens. It is very easy to understand how the net itself has become a source of horrible alienation, once advertising and protocolations have taken it over, once the ones in Rubeca have moved in, once Disney and Coca-Cola have moved in and taken it over.

We even have to go back to language itself. We have to work on language, this is the job of the poet, to clarify the language of the tribe, not purify, but to clarify.

We still need ideology in some sense, in that we need ideas, and that we need a logos, or a word, or an expression of those ideas. I would prefer to end by refering these problems to Michail Bachtin, the Russion critic, who uses the word, dialogics. I like this word because it doesn't bring in any ideological frame. It's a new, fresh word. It means conversation, really, it means high value relating. We call it dialogics because it sounds like something we havn't thought of before.

To me, it's just a good, old 19th century American word, communicativeness. Communicativeness is not necessarily the same thing as simple communication. It implies warmth, a human presence, an actual desire, a pleasure, a joy, a jouisance, if you like, of communication. Communicativeness is erratic, essentially, and festive. This is what Bachtin wanted us to remember, that the spiritual path of material, the body of principle, this is something real. The material body itself, is in effect, a symbol. It is a spiritual principle, and that, if you going to overcome the religious problem, which is to split the body off from the mind, forever, having assention to heaven, which is force and dillusory. What we need more than anything

friends from former Yugoslavia, The net will never reach this world in time. There will always be lag time.

The net, the marvelous miracle of communication which might be some utopian reading of the situation, will never reach the other 99% of the world in time. The reason that it will never come to save the world, like a miracle, is that terrorists will invade the net. They will be representative of all of the outside, and the outside includes all the countries where the people don't even have telephones. This is all the outside, the outside is all demonic for the inside, and therefore the technology will not be transfered, because that would be asking angels to transfer their technologies to devils, from their point of view.

It's not going to happen unless religious power itself is deconstructed or overcome. Because it's religion which has prevented the net from arriving in time to save.

It's a religious problem. We can deconstruct the religious aspect of technology. We can stop reifying technology, and worshipping it. This is a religious paradise, you can't save your soul from technology, unless you know that technology can't save it. An act, even more paradoxically, the process of overcoming, can only be to understand and even more paradoxical, this process of overcoming can be carried out through religious means. In other words, we have to understand the power of the imagination to create values. It is, in fact, through imagination and only through imagination, that values are created. If we understand that, we are free. We, as least as individuals, then are free in some meaningful sense. Maybe not free of incompetence, but in in some sense we are free.

Communication doesn't communicate.

Communication as noise. Communication as cognitive dissonance causes separation. Mediation causes alienation. You can't mediate beyond a certain extent. All forms of communication are mediated, even if I speak with you. It's moving through the air and the molecules of the air are carrying sound to your ears. Simple conversation is already mediated, but you can carry

emminence, but a false transcendence. It is a dangerous, gnostic fallacy. Cyberspace is spurious immortality.

This brings me to the point of the military aspect of the net, because the net is actually a war in heaven. What else would the phrase "information war" mean than a war in heaven? A war which would take place in this spurious heaven, this false transcendence of cyberspace. We know that the net originates as a military space. The original ARPA-net was designed in order to avoid the physical disruption which would have been involved in atomic explosion. The net itself is a very gnostic invention since it transcendentalises matter in a very rapid and effective way. Basically, we are looking at a war in heaven.

Kevin Kelley likes to say that this technology is out of control. This is bullshit, it's not out of control. It's something very different and much more interesting. A brilliant French anthropologist, Pierre Clastres, wrote one book called, "Society against the State," and another, which we (Autonomedia) were very proud to publish, called, 'The Archeology of Violence.' I follow his thinking very closely on a number of points. He makes a distinction between two kinds of warfare in human history: There is primitive war and classical war. These are not at all the same thing. It cannot even be said that the classical war is a developement of the primitive war, it's rather a betrayal of primitive war. If the sacred is violent, then violence is not always negative, unless we believe in pacifism. There are certain kinds of violence which are positive, and primitive warfare is positive in this one sense.

Clastres uses the metaphor of centrifugal and centripedal. The centrifugal machine is one which pushes out from the center, and the centripetal machine is one which pulls in towards the centre. First of all, there is really no such thing as primitive society anymore, there are only societies which have retained primitive forms. The rest of the world has moved on to culture and civilisation. Clastres believed that this was a chosen path on the part of these societies. Consciously or unconsciously these societies developed

certain social functions to centrifugalize power, they don't want power, they refuse power. They want a society, but they don't want the state. They don't want the centrilisation of power, they don't want class structure, they don't want economic hierarchy. They want egalitarianism, they want democracy.

Trancendentalism, which is that mysticism and spiritual experience should be available in an egalitarian fashion. The shaman is not a specialist in ecstasy, because these tribes themselves specialize in ecstasy. At some point in the history of human society, some society rises where primitive warfare changes. Some society rises where primitive warfare is paradoxically changed into it's opposite and unfortunately Clastres died before he was able to really explain this. You can say that particularly wicked and clever people saw that violence could be used to centralize power as well as to disperse power. Or you can say that maybe there were population problems, or climate problems. Some explanations have given the switchover of the hunting-gathering societies which are egalitarien without exception and do not practice sacrifice, with agricultural societies which are non-egalitarian and almost invariably do practice sacrifice.

We are still living in the Neolithic Age.

We are still basically living in the agricultural-industrial period and we still practice sacrifice. If you don't believe it, come to New York State, where they just reintroduced the death penalty, a symbolic sacrifice. At some point primitive warfare turns into classical warfare, and here is the interesting thing about the net. The net is born much more like a primitive warfare structure than a classical one, because of that strange gnostic necessity to avoid atomic disintegration. The net suddenly turns into a space in which power is dispersed rather than centralized. They thought this was a brilliant strategy. It turned out that they lost control of the net almost instantly. They should have realized that a not-centralized system can't be kept in control from within that system. If you take a closed system and decentralize it, then there is no way you can recentral-

about you. You're such a great scientist, we'd like set you up with your own laboratory here."

I don't remember the details, but Paracelsus says "Oh you must set me up in a laboratory! What do you want me to do?" The king says, "Oh, you had this lead into gold thing. This base metal and precious metal experiment…We are very interested in that." Paracelsus says, "Oh, your Majesty, your Majesty, I am just a Puffer. You, your Majesty, you are the real alchemist." "Why?" "This is because all you have to do is give a license to a bank to lend money. That is gold out of nothing."

That was in 15th century. It took another couple of hundred years for the Bank of England to be established on that basis. Now all Banks in the world can lend up to ten times the amount of money, whatever the hell that is, that they have in the vault. It's probably just a harddisk somewhere, so you can take 10 times nothing and call it a dollar and change it into a dollar. That's alchemy. Whoever understands that money is also religion, will also gain in the struggle.

This lecture was meant to be called 'Islam and the Net,' I should say something about that. First of all, you probably remember that the Iranian Revolution was entirely based on the cassette tape recorder. If you don't know yet, I'm going to tell you. Khomeni would not have held power in Iran, well he's dead now. He would not achieved power in Iran without the cassette tape recorder. He was in exile in Iraq and sent recordings of his sermons, which attacked the Shah, to Iran.

The tapes were spread around in a network from mosque to mosque and from cassette recorder to cassette recorder. That was the chief weapon of the Iranian Revolution. There was very little blood involved in that revolution, very little blood and only for a short time. A very serious revolutionary movement was carried out entirely through communications technology.

Just think what they can do with the net. Just think what terrorists can do with the net. The net, to answer the questions of our

ing around in cyberspace. Money is now a purely transcendental principle, it's a symbolic system, it's a symbolon, just like any other symbol. It is broken into two halves and has meaning only if the two halves are reunited. That's where money begins, precious metal, which has no inherent value whatsoever. The relationship between gold and silver, from the start, is based on the lunar-solar cycle. It is pure symbolism.

The first coins were temple souvenirs. This is historically known to numismatics experts studying the history of coinage. The first coins are souvenirs, they are picked up in temples and that coin, that image, becomes valuable as nostalgia. You can take them home to bumfuck the old, and trade one of them for a cow, because it's like mumbo jumbo.

It's called JuJu. Mumbo jumbo and JuJu are African words for mysterious power. The coins themselves, which still have a memorable, valuata aspect, are made out of precious metal, which is gradually added to less precious metal. Presume coins are largely symbolic, they could change to paper which represents the coins. Then in 1933, in America, the link between the paper and the precious metal is cut, paper is now floating free. It's a reference without any referent, and we now have purely abstract money, ready to jack in. Ready to ascend to heaven, to the heaven of cyberspace, and that's exactly what's happened. Ninety percent of all commercial transactions are electronic and do not involve any form of paper. They are in a world where imagination and electricity interrelate in some strange and metaphysical way. Coins become papers become absence. Finally there is an absence itself, valued as a form of money, in a kind of a reverse alchemy, changing precious metals into nothing.

In this regard, my favorite story is about the alchemist, Paracelsus, who was travelling through Germany and was invited into the court of one of those petty German princes of the 15th century, who said, "Oh, Mr Paracelsus, great to meet you. We've heard so much

ize it. That recentralisation of power is going to have to come from outside the system.

This is my point about Kelley's thesis. That a technology, which is out of control as long as you study only the technology, is nothing new. The postal system is out of control. I can get much better security with snailmail now than I can on the net, that is one of the reasons I still don't own a computer. If somebody proved to me that I can really get top security by using a computer and I can send my evil revolutionary messages everywhere with complete safety, I would do it. I am no luddite. I am not against technology just because i don't like technology. I happen to be very bad at it, but that's my personal thing. All the people I knew in the 60's and 70's who were phonephreaking have moved on to the net. The telephone is so oldfashioned, it is just like hot and cold running water. No one is thinking about it at all, there is no mumbo jumbo in the telephone. There is no magic left in the telephone. The magic is all in the net, so that's what everybody wants to control.

Mumbo jumbo is power, and if you control the base of a basic symbolic exchange system, you have power. Those who control the definition of words have power. Those who control the means of communication between you and me have power over both of us. Where is this control going to come from, if the system itself, the technology itself, is out of control. Because it was designed to be out of control, then the control has to come from outside the system.

The internet is not heaven, the internet is not paradise. The internet is not safe, in terms of control, simply because as a closed system it represents the decentralization of power structures. That power can just reach in from outside, and that's exactly what the Church of Scientology can do. For example, the Church of Scientology can kill you, or disperse all your secrets, they can track you to your house and break in and smash your computers. And if you think that the Church of Scientology is powerful, wait until you hear from the American government. And if you think that the

American government is a little outdated, and that as John Perry Barlow says, that governments are not the corporate entities which are ideally designed to control the new technology, then wait until you hear from AT&T, because they are designed to control. It is far worse.

National governments have been practically reduced to flags of convenience, for the international global market. The only reason why the global market is interested in nations, is because you can set up trade barriers, and so forth and so on, and maximize profits, by using the fictions of nationalism. The true corporate structures, the real gnostic beings, the real gnostic angels, are not governments or capitalized corporations within the structures of capital.

The relevance of all these statements to Hungary, is that since 1989, there is not an ideological struggle in the world. The night the Berlin Wall fell, I turned on the television and I heard that the Cold War was over and we won. This is widely believed and as a result, we have been told that ideology has come to an end. That the social has come to an end, even history has come to an end. History itself which involved the dialectical struggle, according to Hegel, is now over. The Cold War is over and we, the capital, won.

There is now only one ideology which disguises itself as nature. Once again we have a false transcendence of bringing together culture and nature, in a totally phoney way, where you can establish a more efficient control mechanism. The net can be controlled from outside, through fear, through terror. The net is extremely suseptible to terror. Because the net is a religious phenomenon and religion is inherently violent, the sacred is inherently violent, and invariably both are involved in fear, in terror. That's why the net is perfect ground, "Grund," in German, for the passion play which is going to occur within five years, maybe within the next five minutes. The net can be controlled from outside, and therefore, resistance must be organized from outside.

So far, we've only had virtual resistance, and actually that is no more than a spectacle of resistance. If we don't organize on the

basis of politics, and of economy, then the net has no future as a space for human freedom. No future.

So far, I don't see that organizing going on. I see that the most brilliant minds that are involved in the net are all involved in cryptography and PGP, and various kinds of mechanisms, which are meant to protect the net from takeover from within the net, but that's not what the danger is coming from. Sooner or later, somebody will figure it out and it better be us because if it isn't, then it's going to be AT&T with 600 channels and the 100 home shopping network. Or riskier, are those heavy footed jack booted governments, or the Church of Scientology.

So the net is not heaven, the body must be present. I love Heath Bunting's point that without the presence of body, this whole thing is just a curious form of metaphysical shlock with cream. Whoever understands the net as religion, whoever understands the problem with body and re-embodiment, will have a tremendous edge, or at least gain an edge in the struggle of whether the net remains a space of potential freedom, or whether it doesn't.

Rememebering the Paeleolithic and how the invention of agriculture relates to the invention of the alphabet, which relates to the invention of the computer, is a vital and important course now.

Whoever can understand this, whoever can understand the reason why the state will be the first to lose control of the net? First of all, the corporations will not lose control in the same way. Whoever understands that's methaphysics, that's religion. We steal a march in strategic terms. We will be one days march ahead of the animal, which is oppressive control, whether it comes from governments, or from corporations, or from our own disturbed psyche. There are two vital areas of understanding, politics and economics. The politics is cruel and simple and I think we 're understanding it very well.

I would like to think about the economics for a minute. We see that money is also going to heaven. Billions of billions of billions of billions of billions of whatever units of money are there, float-