

Technology and the State

An introduction

Fifth Estate Collective

Perhaps the most insidious aspect of modern, centralized technology, even more than its pervasiveness, is its complete acceptance in almost all quarters as an integral part of the human experience (and among so-called “revolutionaries” as a prerequisite for a change to a humane society).

Humanoids and humans have spent the vast portion of our time on the planet with little or no technology and only in the last 10,000 years or so (an infinitesimal portion of our existence) has the rise of mechanical and technological improvements begun to affect us and the other species with which we share the planet. The capacity for innovation and invention seemed almost innate in humans once the first rudimentary developments of prehistoric times became wide-spread. The first inventions were employed as a means to improve what was often a harsh and dangerous existence, but they immediately put us on the road on which we currently find ourselves.

The simple but monumental development of stone weapons increased the available food supply for humans, but at the same time gave to one species the ability to obliterate others, which, in fact, was accomplished in several cases.

The most important technological leap in history was the innovation of agriculture, which led to a complete redefinition of the human experience and altered people from a condition of wildness to one of domestication. As the system of agriculture began to predominate, humans became rooted to a fixed geographical region—and for the first time—could produce a surplus of goods. It was within this social setting that the most significant social institution in history emerged—the vertical bureaucratic hierarchy—and its expression in class society and the political state.

Since that epoch 10,000 years ago, both technology and the political rule of the State have snowballed to the extent that they now stand in the position of dominating all of human existence. Their development has continued unaltered since that period irrespective of the particular type of political rule or mode of production in a given era, to the point where human existence on the planet is threatened by both.

All of us want electric lights and indoor plumbing, but not the simultaneous developments of the hydrogen bomb and the pollution of the air which has been developed along with the conveniences of life. But the fact remains that we have both and it may be quite possible that one could have not been created without the other, so in tandem are the military machines of the State and the major inventions of the modern epoch.

The two articles below detail the Frankenstein syndrome inherent in technology at the service of the State. Rudy Perkins [“The State & Nuclear Power”] describes how the development of nuclear power is tied directly into nuclear weaponry; and in the following piece, Duke Skywatcher [“Star Wars? The arms race of the future is now”] demonstrates that Star Wars’ technology is not a fantasy, but that contemporary Darth Vaders are planning bigger and better wars for us all the time—this time in space.

Though neither presents alternatives, neither could be expected to since a thorough analysis of the development and function of technology has yet to be made. However, if the term “revolution” is not simply to be a codeword for the next batch of political rulers, we have to begin an investigation of all of the elements of our lives and be

prepared, if need be, to make fundamental alterations in any of them rather than accept the givens of that which oppresses us.

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