

Hidden Price Tags

**An Eastern Orthodox Look at the Dark
Side of Technology and Its Best Use**

Volume 1: Start Here...

C.J.S. Hayward

C.J.S. Hayward Publications Spotsylvania

© 2010-2023 C.J.S. Hayward
Licensed CCo (“No rights reserved”).

You are invited to visit the author website at
<https://cjshayward.com>, and explore other, related titles on
his bookshelf at <https://cjshayward.com/books/>.

*To all my parents John and Linda,
Thank you for limiting my television use,
when I was still a child!*

Table of Contents

Foreword to the <i>Hidden Price Tags</i> Series	7
Foreword to Volume One, <i>Start Here...</i>	13
Note on Footnotes and Claim to Originality.....	15
Introduction	17
How Can I Take My Life Back from my Phone?	29
The <i>Silicon</i> Rule	43
55 New Maxims for the Cyber-Quarantine.....	60
A Guide to Technology’s Hidden Price Tags	72
The Magic Stone.....	168
Conclusion.....	183

Foreword to the *Hidden Price Tags* series

I gave my heirarch and abbot a copy of *The Luddite's Guide to Technology* for Christmas, and told him, "If I've contributed something to the conversation, it's probably in this book."

This collection is intended to break the contents of that book and a few related works into smaller and more manageable volumes, and give an introduction and discussion questions for individual works.

My life as a whole has been heavy with technology and heavy with theology / patrology, and my distinctive contributions may lie in relation to both. It's very easy to have your life taken over and run by technology; this is about unplugging to an extent, mastering the technologies you use, and using technologies so that they are beneficial instead of draining you. The reality is that without a conscious effort, and perhaps with many kinds of conscious effort, you will be hit by the dark sides of technology.

If this series succeeds, it will be relevant both when it was written, and later on when there are some of the same kinds of forces at play but the list of technologies that are *au courant* has shifted in significant ways.

I do not wish to continue to update this series to

continue to give the impression that it was just written, but there is something timeless even to good books on technology. As regards television, I unhesitatingly draw on Neil Postman's 1985 *Amusing Ourselves to Death: Public Discourse in an Age of Show Business*,¹ Jerry Mander's 1978 *Four Arguments for the **Elimination** of Television*,² and Marie Winn's 1977 *The Plug-in Drug*³ as worth listening to today. None of them anticipate ubiquitous mobile devices, and Jerry Mander is skeptical about whether computers would be of any real use for consumers. I don't mean that Mander was skeptical about whether personal-use computers would be an overall improvement to the picture; I mean that he did not anticipate personally owned computers or computer networks at all, let alone mobile Internet devices. But when you read one of his arguments, the argument of "artificial unusualness,"⁴ under "Argument Four: The Inherent Biases of Television,"⁵ a relatively light edit could give the impression of an incisive analysis of technology—*today*—whose ink is still wet on its pages. *Artificial unusuality was part of television when he wrote it, it is more a part of television now, it is a feature of social media, and it is a core part to how you make technology addictive today.*⁶ It is not just because I have heard people say that television is the future of the Internet that I believe these books about technology are relevant. Much may have changed in the intervening 40-50 years

¹ Neil Postman, *Amusing Ourselves to Death: Public Discourse in the Age of Showbusiness* (London: Methuen, 2007).

² Jerry Mander, *Four Arguments for the Elimination of Television* (New York: Perennial, 2002).

³ Marie Winn, *The Plug-in Drug* (New York: Penguin, 1985).

⁴ Jerry Mander, *Four Arguments for the Elimination of Television* (New York: Perennial, 2002), 299-322.

⁵ Jerry Mander, *Four Arguments for the Elimination of Television* (New York: Perennial, 2002), 263-346.

⁶ See, for instance, "The Acceleration of Addictiveness," The acceleration of addictiveness, accessed November 18, 2022, <http://www.paulgraham.com/addiction.html>.

since Mander wrote his title, but *the more some things change, the more some things stay the same*. The principles in these precursors to this series are still relevant, and I believe the principles in this collection will likely be at least partially relevant when smartphones and smartwatches are no longer the cutting edge of mainstream consumer use of technology, and, perhaps, there will seem to be something quaint about the concept of watching porn on a flat and external screen.

When I first wrote “ ‘Social Antibodies’ Needed: A Request of Orthodox Clergy” (in volume 4 of this series)⁷ in 2014, I made multiple attempts at a literature search on Amazon found nothing much on some other queries, and “orthodox technology” turned up, among Orthodox Christian works on technology: my own work and nobody else’s.

At the time of this writing that is no longer true. The first result for that search is no longer one of my own: *Religion, Science, and Technology*.⁸ Jean-Claude Larchet’s *The New Media Epidemic: The Undermining of Society, Family, and Our Own Soul*⁹ is on Amazon now and eminently worth reading. But my own works represent six of the first page Amazon search results for that query. As I said in “ ‘Social Antibodies’ Needed,” about what I found when I searched Amazon, “*Um, **thanks**, I think. I guess I’m an expert, or at least a resource, and even if I didn’t want to, I should probably make myself available to Orthodox*

⁷ C.J.S. Hayward, *Hidden Price Tags: An Eastern Orthodox Look at the Dark Side of Technology and Its Best Use: Volume 4: Nitty, Gritty, Ascesis*, Spotsylvania: C.J.S. Hayward Publications, 2023.

⁸ Katina Michael, M. G. Michael, and Kallistos, *Religion, Science & Technology: An Eastern Orthodox Perspective ; an Interview with Metropolitan Kallistos Ware* (Wollongong, Australia: University of Wollongong, 2017).

⁹ Jean-Claude Larchet and Archibald Andrew Torrance, *The New Media Epidemic: The Undermining of Society, Family, and Our Own Soul* (Jordanville, NY: Holy Trinity Publications, The Printshop of St Job of Pochaev, Holy Trinity Monastery, 2019).

clergy, with my spiritual father and bishop foremost.” But for the most part, I am a somewhat obscure local expert if I am in fact a local subject-matter expert.

There may be a number of things I fail to project about the practical realities of the Internet of Bodies but I suspect this book, an attempt at outlining Orthodox asceticism governing technology use, will be somewhere on the scene then. There are some technologies that I have avoided using at all on overpowering negative intuitions, like SecondWife, er, SecondLife, and recommendations may shift from “Use freely,” to “Use carefully,” to “Use very cautiously,” to “Better not to use,” to “Don’t use at all.” We are having more concentrated versions of earlier precursors today, like eighty proof liquor followed age-old wine in ages past. And the case for abstinence may grow increasingly strong as the list of technologies that are *au courant* grows increasingly strong.

So you have in your hands something that may turn out to be significant, possibly moreso than my Amazon reviews may reflect. (After I posted a critique of the “Blessed Seraphim Rose” crowd,¹⁰ admirers were not sated by giving that specific work one star reviews. They also follow through to see that positive Amazon ratings and reviews of any of my works continue to be taken down if they can be dislodged. This may also be part of why my works get one star reviews simply alleging, in two words, “Poorly written.”¹¹)

Reading Marie Winn’s *The Plug-in Drug*¹² helped me appreciate why my political science professor at Calvin

¹⁰ C.J.S. Hayward, *The Seraphinians: “Blessed Seraphim Rose” and His Axe-Wielding Western Converts* (Wheaton, IL: C.J.S. Hayward Publications, 2012).

¹¹ “Amazon.com: The Luddite’s Guide to Technology: The Past Writes Back to Humane Tech!,” Amazon, accessed November 18, 2022, <https://www.amazon.com/Luddites-Guide-Technology-Writes-Humane/dp/1731439539>.

¹² Marie Winn, *The Plug-in Drug* (New York: Penguin, 1985).

forcefully told a class, “*Playboy* is more Christian than *Sesame Street*!”¹³ I am writing at a time when technologies are addictive and need to be carefully used if they are used at all, and works like “The Acceleration of Addictiveness” (at <https://paulgraham.com/addiction.html>)¹⁴ suggest that such caution will only be more thoroughly justified as time continues and further modifications of technology unfold before us.

Why Orthodoxy?

One Orthodox community member talked about how he asked people, “I want to understand Orthodoxy. What books should I read?” He got an answer of, “You don’t understand Orthodoxy by reading a book. You understand Orthodoxy by attending services.” And that is how he answers requests other people make of him for reading recommendations to understand Orthodoxy.

Orthodoxy is an oral culture that uses reading, and monasticism more so. This book is not intended to explain Orthodoxy; you must attend Orthodox services if you want that. But Orthodoxy is how I understand being human and Orthodox theology has “Who are we?” for one of the biggest questions to answer.¹⁵ This big question includes another capitially important question: “What is good for us as

¹³ I believe his reason this forceful and possibly exaggerated statement is that *Playboy* is an open and undisguised evil that young people are warned about; *Sesame Street* is a whitewashed tomb full of rotten things which masquerades as a messenger of all things good, wholesome, and educational, and that is a bigger mark of the satanic. (“And no marvel; for Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light,” 2 Corinthians 11:14, *Classic Orthodox Bible*.)

¹⁴ “The Acceleration of Addictiveness,” The acceleration of addictiveness, accessed November 18, 2022, <http://www.paulgraham.com/addiction.html>.

¹⁵ When I was beginning studying theology at Cambridge in 2002, in an early tutorial supervision I was told that the three fundamental questions in theology are “Who is God?”, “Who are we?”, and “How do we relate to God?”

human beings?” This in turn includes “What use and abstention from technology is good for us as human beings?” That question drives this whole series. I do not write to reason you into being Orthodox, but I would be mistreating you to use anything less than the best resources I know to answer the challenges of technology and using technology without burning yourself.

Electronic technology has perhaps been around for a couple hundred years or less.¹⁶ Our genus *Homo* has been around for millions of years,¹⁷ and our subspecies *Homo sapiens sapiens* has been around for over a hundred thousand years.¹⁸ This means that for well over 99% of the time our human race has been around, electronic technology was simply not part of the picture for anyone. *Maybe the keys to human flourishing and the conditions that the human person are adapted to, are older than electronic technology, and perhaps there are things we need to learn from what was normal human life.*

Let’s go!

¹⁶ “History of Technology Timeline,” Encyclopædia Britannica (Encyclopædia Britannica, inc.), accessed November 18, 2022, <https://www.britannica.com/story/history-of-technology-timeline>.

¹⁷ “Homo,” Wikipedia (Wikimedia Foundation, November 7, 2022), <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Homo>.

¹⁸ Glenn Elert, “Age of Homo Sapiens,” Age of Homo Sapiens - The Physics Factbook, accessed November 18, 2022, <https://hypertextbook.com/facts/1997/TroyHolder.shtml>.

Foreword to Volume One, “Start Here..”

One friend pointed out that in our culture as it was at the time, ethics do not begin far into an education. Some of the biggest ethical principles are frontloaded into kindergarten: share, take turns, compromise, the Golden Rule, and all of the things that made their way into “All I Really Needed to Know I Learned in Kindergarten” posters.¹⁹

I have, in a way that is perhaps not nearly so simple, tried to frontload items in the collection that are both low-hanging fruit and foundational. That is why “The *Silicon Rule*,” is frontloaded to be the very second chapter of this book, after what Orthodox readers may almost instantly recognize as a tribute to Fr. Tom Hopko’s much-loved “55 Maxims.”²⁰ (I do not claim to equal his achievement, and I sometimes fail to get anywhere near Fr. Tom’s simplicity, but my abbot commented that they were still quite “relatable,” a virtue inherited from the text I was emulating.) The *Silicon Rule* is in no sense equal to the

¹⁹ “Metal Sign All I Really Need to Know I Learned in Kindergarten Vintage ...,” accessed November 18, 2022, <https://www.amazon.com/Really-learned-Kindergarten-Vintage-FulgumMetal/dp/BoB467X2V3>.

²⁰ Jacobse, “Fr. Thomas Hopko: 55 Maxims for Christian Living,” St. Peter Orthodox Church, February 17, 2016, <https://stpeterorthodoxchurch.com/55-maxims-for-christian-living/>.

Golden Rule, but it may reflect clearly enough as a tribute to it.

However, the intent is anything but to be fluffy. Also frontloaded is a guide to different individual technologies, a concrete roadmap rather than just articulating a few principles without hinting at application. The text as a whole interweaves both principles and applications.

I very much hope that all the volumes will bring reward to the reader, but if you read only one volume out of the whole collection, I have tried hard to make sure that no one would question your judgment in just reading this one.

Note on Footnotes and Claim to Originality

It has been a thing to want originality, and to footnote debts to other authors but otherwise at least implicitly claim, “Except as I explicitly document otherwise, I was born in a house that I built with my own two hands.”

There may be some original content in my writing, even strikingly original and possibly groundbreaking, but the claim I make to originality is nil. I have many debts to many people and more than I can trace (such may be classified as “unintentional plagiarism”), and I do not believe I was born in a house I built with my own two hands. I attempt the renovation and expansion of a mansion whose first roots I cannot trace and which has been touched by many hands before me, and God willing will be touched by many hands after.

When I was an aspiring scholar with an academic library, and I had an essay or assignment, I would do a literature search among the scholarly literature, and document what were often genuine dependencies and my genuine sources. That is not my situation now. *That is not the situation of my readers now.* I made footnotes for the book the first volume in this series was largely drawn from, and what I found was that I was doing five minute Googlepedia hits that may have documented a claim but

generally had nothing to do with where I got my ideas. And today, when in the title of one book I would probably like, we are *Amusing and Informing Ourselves to Death*, people carry cellphones and those who trace a footnote are probably about as capable as I am of a five minute Googlepedia hit.

Additionally, this work as it originally stands has a little more than a thousand pages of various kinds of un-footnoted writing. If we say that comes with an average of three footnotes per page and five minutes per footnote, that comes to over fifteen thousand footnotes, taking more than two hundred and fifty hours, or more than six uninterrupted forty hour workweeks. And I hardly have forty hour workweeks to spare.

Footnoting in this collection is essentially as original, meaning half-fledged Googlepedia hits for the first volume, standard scholarly footnoting in originally academic work, and naming of important sources in the remaining five out of seven volumes.

My apologies for readers who want footnotes; I know it's considered a sign of a serious or formal book, but I would rather make this collection available soon than wait indefinitely for all the half-fledged Googlepedia footnotes to be available.

Introduction

We live in an age of distracted living. Distracted driving is killing innocent pedestrians.²¹ Distracted parenting is disrupting normal, healthy, and essential ways parents interact with children to develop normal social skills.²² People ask, mystified, why people are pushing strollers in front of cars, and falsely assume it must be deliberate rather than considering scandalously neglective parenting.²³ And this is perhaps a sensational example of outward and visible symptom of internal and spiritual wreckage. In the Sermon on the Mount, Christ said, “Ye

²¹ Ray Ot et al., “Distracted Driving Presentations and Education from Endddd,” EndDD, August 26, 2022, <https://www.endddd.org/>.

²² “What the Still Face Experiment Teaches Us about Distracted Parenting,” Psychology Today (Sussex Publishers), accessed October 3, 2022, <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/thriving-toddler/202104/what-the-still-face-experiment-teaches-us-about-distracted-parenting>.

²³ “Why Do Some People Push Baby Carriages and Strollers in Front ... - Quora,” accessed October 3, 2022, <https://www.quora.com/Why-do-some-people-push-baby-carriages-and-strollers-in-front-of-them-to-get-traffic-to-stop-It-seems-very-unsafe>.

cannot serve God and mammon."²⁴ Today one might say "You cannot give your full attention to both your child and your phone." Giving what attention you will naturally give to your phone once you abandon your eternal vigilance, and that attention will be fragmented far beyond what happened in Christ's day when one tried to keep one eye on God and one eye on the wealth of the day. Give your attention to your phone and your child will not profit from the dregs left over. This is still is downwind wreckage arising from an inner and spiritual wreckage that is more ethereal and harder to pin down, and harder to notice. There is something very nasty going on in us spiritually *long* before we can push a stroller in front of oncoming traffic without even a glance cast at traffic on the road. Perhaps we only notice concretely when moms push a stroller in front of a car, because then the invisible does something sensationally visible and sensationally bad.

We have created a situation where it is possible for ordinary people to casually and without malice kill innocent lives. If we return to a classic image of the three ethical questions, namely how ships can avoid bumping into each other, how they can internally stay shipshape, and what destination they are meant to reach, we are seeing terrible collisions that sink ships because unrestrained and trusting use of cellphones has devastated what little was left of their being shipshape. Being shipshape has always been difficult under even the best of circumstances; but now I would recall an ancient prophecy saying that people who just hold their faith in the last days will be honored above the more ancient giants who raised the dead by their prayers. We have reached a degree of inner Hell that casual killing may

²⁴ Matthew 6:24, Classic Orthodox Bible.

be seen as tragic after the fact, but mothers do not so much as look up or listen before pushing their children's strollers in front of a car and calmly, nonchalantly, killing their own dearly loved children.

Things like this represent too big a problem to be solved by minor tweaking of a mostly unchanged course of action. We need to address *big problems* by learning from *big questions*. Nothing less will really do. The short-sighted thinking that got us **in to** this pickle will almost certainly not suffice to get us **out of** this pickle.

What is good for us as human beings? We would do well to ask if we have embraced something as destructive as unrestrained phone use. This calls for a step back and a look at the big questions. It has been because we have neglected such questions that we are in such a pickle now. Let us take a step back and ask what is good for us as human beings.

This is one of the biggest questions out there, and on a fuller understanding of ethics, what is good for man is closely tied to three ethical questions.

C.S. Lewis posed the three classic ethical questions through the image of a fleet of ships out at sea:²⁵

- 1 How can ships avoid colliding with each other?
- 2 How do ships manage to be shipshape and keep in good running order?
- 3 What destination are the ships out sailing to arrive at in the first place?

The question of what is good for our race relates to

²⁵ C.S.Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, New York: Simon & Schuster 1980, 71.

all three of these ethical questions.

I do not believe I can add much to the three classical questions, but I do think it a contribution to suggest the imperative of looking for answers to these questions. I do suggest that the question of what *modern technology use* is good for us is for certain obvious reasons not addressed by the giants of ages past. Not that their words are without bearing or import to technology, but they addressed how these ethical questions are addressed with the technologies and forms of property that existed in antiquity. A loose way of putting this book's whole question is, "What kind of guidance would someone like St. John Chrysostom offer in using technology, if our technology were around in his day?" In fact, the relevance and import extend beyond implying what St. John's remarks about the obscene theatre have to do with internet porn. The issue applies to porn but it also applies to a great many other things that may seem more innocent. I would suggest that St. Paul offers words that have every relevance here concerning what others have said: " 'All things are lawful for me' —*maybe*, but all things are not expedient."²⁶

Most of the recommendations—

- From "Drop it and pay attention to the person you are with" to "Use older technologies,"
- From a hobby recommendation engine to give phones some competition at <https://cjshayward.com/hobby/>²⁷ to

²⁶ I Corinthians 6:12, Classic Orthodox Bible.

²⁷ C.J.S. Hayward, "Help Me Find a Hobby!," CJS Hayward, November 6, 2019, <https://cjshayward.com/hobby/>.

unbundling phone functionality,

- From mentioning relevant classics to “As always, ask your priest,”
- From being transparent to your loved ones about activity on Facebook to offering “The *Silicon Rule*” as an ethical guideline,

—are intended *both* to prevent at least some collisions between ships, *and* to promote being shipshape internally. That is, they partially answer both of the first two ethical questions. Relatively little is said about the third question of what destination the fleet of ships is meant to reach; that may well be the most important question of all, but I am entirely content to stick with the answers provided in classics referenced in this text. Indeed, in monasticism, classic texts serve as everyday practical workhorses, and fewer new books are written because the old ones are still sufficient, but if the old books were lost, new ones would be written to fill the gap, and the new books would work just as well as the old ones. This title is not intended to *compete* with old books, but to *fill a coverage gap* in a situation that did not exist when the old books were written, and fill it in the spirit of old books, including St. John Chrysostom as the greatest public speaker in the history of the Orthodox Church.

**“The demons always fast,”
but *we* can profit by fasting.**

When I was in England, there was a saying in

circulation among Orthodox that I have not really found back in the U.S: “The demons *always* fast.”

A paraphrase of the point of this remark is, “Fasting is one tool among others; it can be of use, but it is neither the beginning nor the end of asceticism.” And with it is an understanding that for converts especially, the fasting aspect of your rule of life is supposed to be something you should be working on with your priest.

I do not wish to exaggerate or unduly promote the use of fasting among Orthodox asceticism; fasting directly benefits only the person who fasts, while almsgiving benefits both giver and the recipient, even if Christ said, “It is more blessed to give than to receive.”²⁸ Prayer is a much bigger deal than either fasting or almsgiving, and the whole collection of asceticisms all fit together in the broader pastoral picture.

Nonetheless, I suggest that fasting and an attitude of “ ‘All things are lawful for me,’—*maybe*, but all things are not expedient: ‘all things are lawful for me,’—*maybe*, but all things edify not.”²⁹ have particularly direct bearing on profitable use of technology.

I would briefly state that profitable use of technology is governed by asceticism, while unprofitable use of technology only serves one’s own will. I would also remind the reader that the commandment that could have kept Adam and Eve in Paradise was a command to fast merely from the fruit of one tree, and if our race had fasted, our race would have remained in Paradise. *Fasting can be a way to avoid opening a Pandora’s box.*

I would add a last framing concept:

²⁸ Acts 20:35, Classic Orthodox Bible.

²⁹ I Corinthians 10:23, Classic Orthodox Bible.

Technologies have hidden price tags.

In general, the benefits of using a technology are obvious, or are made obvious. Technologies whose benefits are not communicated do not really sell; so, technologies which sell have some conceivable attraction to them. In general, the benefits of technology call for far less basic investigation than a well-suited analysis of its hidden price tags.

One statement I made, now obsolete in its detailed assertion, but raising a concern that is still relevant, is that “*A television is the most expensive appliance in the house.*” For a washer or a dryer, it costs the purchase price, plus electricity and in this case other utilities, plus supplies like detergent and maybe fabric softener, plus maybe a repair or using breakage as occasion to buy a newer model. However, the damage it does to your pocketbook is in entirety visible up front, and the money it costs you only includes obvious costs.³⁰

Not so with television. It has very well been observed that in television, the shows are the packaging and the content is the advertising, and little children sometimes pick up that the advertisements are more stimulating and more masterfully crafted than the “real” shows.

Therefore, the damage done to your pocketbook by watching television includes not only the “up front” costs,

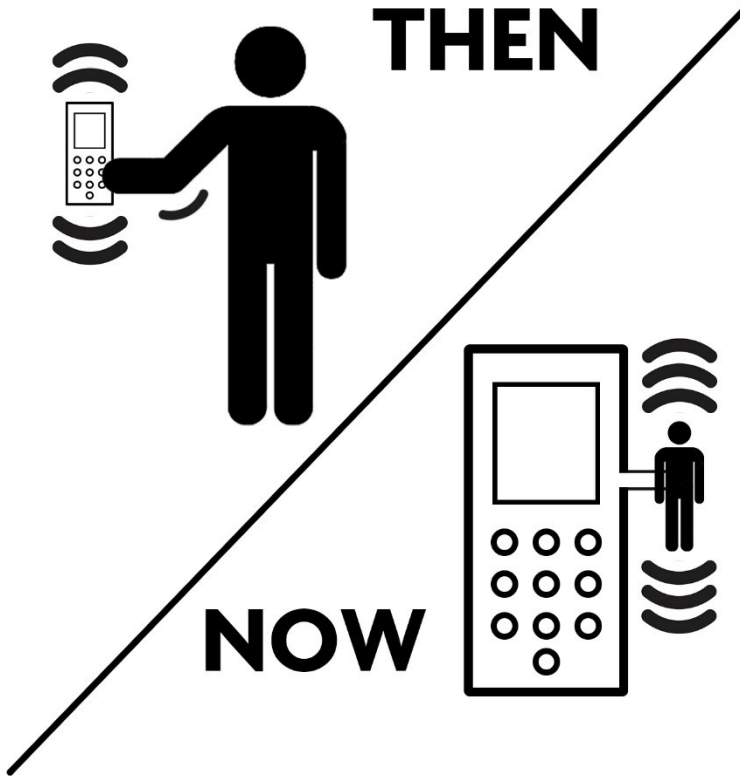
³⁰ The one exception to this rule that I can think of was when detergent manufacturers made single-use detergent packs that looked positively *lickable*, like the old Aqua look on Macs but only moreso, followed by public-service-announcement-style advertisements to tell the public that young people are prone to put things in their mouths. Although that *is* quite the hidden price tag!

but costs a steady stream of purchases of things that you didn't need until television's advertising informed you that you really, really need it, and in the opinion of some, advertising's robbing you of the ability to be content with what you have by stimulating covetousness is spiritual damage worse than what the coveting costs your pocketbook. And, if you read books like *Amusing Ourselves to Death*³¹, you may realize that that is outside of the brain rot caused by that kind of technology. So the hidden price tag of a television extends not only to the costs of things you purchased because television commercials stimulated a felt need for them, but also exacts a terrible price to your soul.

“*Who is rich? He who is content,*” as the saying goes, and contentment is a wonderful and satisfying thing to have. The entire purpose of advertisements is to decimate your ability to be content and instead only have purchases that offer the most fleeting pleasure as you keep wanting more and you want this wanting to deliver the joy that comes from contentment.

Hard to see as they may be, this text is meant to help you see and weigh hidden price tags. They can be more costly than what you can see up front, and they can represent a deeper kind of cost, for instance in phones invading our lives and destroying our capacity for quiet:

³¹ Neil Postman, *Amusing Ourselves to Death: Public Discourse in the Age of Showbusiness* (London: Methuen, 2007).



Withered like Merlin

In C.S. Lewis, *That Hideous Strength*,³² the heroes are discussing the kind of time Merlin came in:

“I mean even in Merlin’s time (he came at the

³² C.S. Lewis, “That Hideous Strength,” Internet Archive, January 1, 1970, <https://archive.org/details/in.ernet.dli.2015.207839/page/n353/mode/2up>.

extreme tail end of it), though you could still use that kind of [power] in the universe innocently, you couldn't do it safely. The things weren't bad in themselves, but they were already bad for us. They sort of withered the man who dealt with him. Not on purpose. They couldn't help doing it. Merlinus is withered. He's quite pious and humble and all that, but something has been taken out of him. That quietness of his is just a little bit deadly, like the quiet of a gutted building."

This last paragraph has everything to do with technology and cell phones in our society. They wither us. When we do not have our intravenous drip of noise, there is something in us like the silence of a gutted building. And something in our technology more like wills in matter, not conscious, or game or other AI. I don't know how popular it is to be pious or humble today, but in other ways I see many parallels with a withered Merlin.

I am calling in to rein in use of technology that has become increasingly addictive and exacts an increasingly heavy toll on its users, not to mention secondhand effects. If people heed this call, other people after me may go teetotaler from phone ownership. However, I would hope that this book would say something both to people who want to rein in their addiction to certain technologies and people who will go with a Ralph Nader's *Unsafe at Any Speed*³³ approach and practice abstinence.

³³ Ralph Nader, *Unsafe at Any Speed. The Designed-in Dangers of the American Automobile. (Updated.)* (Toronto, etc.: Bantam Books, 1973).

As always, ask your priest

For the concerns addressed in this book, an Orthodox father confessor can be your best friend, and I would ask your priest if he is willing to help you untangle yourself from technologies. (If you do not have an Orthodox father-confessor or your father-confessor is not willing, I would seriously consider engaging a psychologist.) A second pair of eyes can be quite helpful, and a priest can offer a very helpful second set of eyes.

In the spiritual life, including freeing yourself from domination by technologies, it is easy to make big, bold moves, and drastically overcommit, then find you've bitten off more than you can chew, and then give up, overwhelmed. The rule for many things in the pastoral life is to start small and build up slowly but steadily.

"Comfort zone" has become a cliché, but I would suggest a slightly broader picture: your *comfort zone*, which does not make immediate progress, your *stretch zone*, where you are being stretched outside of your comfort zone but the challenge can be highly productive, and your *panic zone*, where it is simply too much and you are in an unproductive panic. The ideal I would posit here is to alternate between being in your comfort zone and your stretch zone, ideally under pastorally experienced guidance.

A word about confession

My abbot has told me a couple of times, if I am being assailed by thoughts, "[Just go to] *confession*." I obeyed, the first two times simply following instruction without realizing, or searching for, a reason behind a clear

command.

I realized much to my surprise that when I brought that to confession, I was freed and felt a tremendous peace.

Advice that I heard prior to entering a monastery, and that has been approved to keep in a monastery, is that when I am being assailed by thoughts of escape, pray through it, pray hard, though it seems tough and without hope and eventually help and grace will come, and the feeling when that demon has been vanquished is delightful.

I'm not interested in dealing in guilt trips, but I am interested in something that will help Orthodox give better and more liberating confessions, and be more relieved and joyful when they have born the shame of showing their wounds to the Great Physician who receives all our confessions.

If you read this book and something in this is convicting, I invite you to write it down and defeat it at your next confession.

I have added questions for discussion, study and self-examination. *I would encourage you to take advantage of them*, and pray that they might be part of how you grow spiritually.

A note about the author

Br. Christos Hayward is a novice at St. Demetrios Monastery and holds master's degrees bridging mathematics and computers (UIUC), and theology and philosophy (Cambridge).

Introduction to “How Can I Take my Life Back from my Phone?”

This title chapter represents the knot in which the whole rest of the book comes together, and is intended to pack the biggest punch for what you can do regarding phones specifically.

Some have said that people don't buy books; they buy chapters. If you have purchased this book for one chapter, this is probably the chapter you purchased it for.

That stated, this chapter is interconnected with all the rest of the text, and it is intended to be the sharp tip of a solid spear.

It is also intended to have the most relevant low-hanging fruit for people seeking to be freed from the tyranny of life where our phones have turned the tables on us and we are working for our phones.

How Can I Take my Life Back from my Phone?

“Is there someplace in the world that does not have Internet?”

—A prolific poster on Twitter

The *Silicon Rule*

In *The Silicon Rule*, I suggested that a good rule of thumb is to ask, “What do Silicon Valley technology executives choose for their children?” Steve Jobs, for instance, did not have a nerd’s paradise for his kids. He had walls with big bookshelves and animated discussions. His children had not seen an iPad when it first entered the limelight. Employees of technology company chose what might seem some remarkably strict rules, because they didn’t buy into the mystique of hot gadgets. They knew better.

In *Bridge to Terebithia*, the author introduced Leslie as privileged with a capital **P**. The biggest cue of her Privilege is quite possibly *not* that money is not the issue, but that her family Does Not Own a Television. Today that

character might also be introduced as Not Having a Smartphone, for several reasons.

People know on several levels that Facebook and smartphones suck the life out of their users. That's old news. This page is about an alternative.

How I tamed my iPhone

I have what might be called a Holy Grail of iPhone usage. I carry my iPhone, but I rule it, and it does not rule me. It is often at hand, but I have domineered it well enough that I don't compulsively check it. I get almost all of the practical benefits with none of the hidden price tags.

How?

Prequel: How I tamed television

Before I became strictly an iPhone user, I was a slightly relaxed television non-user. I grew up with limited television, one hour per day during the schoolyear and two hours during summer vacation. I read Neil Postman's *Amusing Ourselves to Death: Public Discourse in an Age of Show Business*³⁴ and the more book-like Jerry Mander's *Four Arguments for the Elimination of Television*,³⁵ and also books like Stephen Covey's *First Things First*.³⁶ I slowly checked out the rest of the way from television. As an

³⁴ Neil Postman, *Amusing Ourselves to Death: Public Discourse in the Age of Showbusiness* (London: Methuen, 2007).

³⁵ Jerry Mander, *Four Arguments for the Elimination of Television* (New York: Perennial an imprint of HarperCollins Publishers, 2002).

³⁶ Stephen R. Covey, Merrill A. Roger, and Rebecca Merrill, *First Things First* (Simon & Schuster, 2017).

older child and later a young man, I had the vibrancy one associates with an unhindered imagination, often finding the days before television, or something that as might as well be the days before television.

One thinks of a Far Side cartoon with a caption of “In the days before television,” and shows a family gathered together and all huddled around a blank spot on the wall where one would expect a television. The irony of the Far Side cartoon is that time before television sucked the life out of everything was much more vibrant, not a family huddled around a vacant spot by a wall.

Prequel: Weston A. Price diet

I’m not specifically interested in converting people to Western A. Price or Paleo diets beyond saying that it is my opinion that your body’s engine merits pure premium fuel, but I wanted to comment on something very specific about *Nourishing Traditions*. As one friend pointed out, some of the ways food is produced are really gross; most vegetable oils besides olive, avocado, and coconut oils have to be extracted under conditions that makes them go rancid immediately, like popped popcorn, and are then made yellow and clear and not smelling bad by chemical wizardry, or the artificial phenomenon of getting four gallons of milk from a cow per day and then manipulations to make 2% milk (“No significant difference has been shown between milk derived from rbST-treated and non-rbST-treated cows except for the additional ingredients of blood and pus.”). It overall builds a sense of “This is really gross and unfit for human consumption,” and that’s good.

It is worth your while to read books about how, for instance, standard smartphone use is reprogramming our brains to be bowls of tapioca.³⁷ I gave, and meant, five stars to Jean-Claude Larchet's *The New Media Epidemic: The Undermining of Society, Family, and Our Own Soul*. My own title in the same vein is *The Luddite's Guide to Technology*.

Now on to my iPhone

I check my iPhone at intervals: once per hour, or perhaps once per day. That breaks the spine of constant checking, at least eventually. My phone has three games, all of them for my little nephews, and I've come to dodge showing them games on my smartphone, because when I show them a real, physical toy, they can wait turns and share, while smartphone games are addictive enough that when I take out my phone and let them play with it, squabbles consistently follow. In good spirit, when they wanted to play pinball games on my phone, I deleted the pinball game and then made a crude pinball machine out of some leftover wood, nails, rubber bands, large ball bearings, and a plastic pipe. They were initially disappointed, but when they had some time to play with it, they began to be imaginative in a way I have never seen with a smartphone video game.

Returning to my smartphone, I use it for utilitarian purposes, including making bottom-liner use of Facebook

³⁷ Jean-Claude Larchet and Archibald Andrew Torrance, *The New Media Epidemic: The Undermining of Society, Family, and Our Own Soul* (Jordanville, NY: Holy Trinity Publications, The Printshop of St Job of Pochaev, Holy Trinity Monastery, 2019), 24ff.

and Twitter. Bottom-liner use of Facebook can be constructed, but having it fill the hours is depressing for anyone.

Specific suggestions for phones

On this point I would say that there are few things you must do, but many things you might do. Probably the single best advice I know is to work with an Orthodox priest who is comfortable freeing you from your chains to technology. Good advice is to make a small change to start, and then slowly but steadily build up until what you have in place is working for you.

I would also underscore that these are suggestions, that some people have found helpful. I do not use all the rules others have found helpful, and I've found benefit in getting stricter with myself as time has passed. However, you don't owe a duty to make all of these your own.

- **Learn from Humane Tech**
(<https://humanetech.com/>).³⁸ Humane Tech is a movement to mitigate some of turning people's brains to tapioca,³⁹ and it is well worth attending. I don't believe they go far enough; I believe that Orthodox asceticism and fasting provide a good backbone, but knowing which apps make you happy and which apps make you sad is at very

³⁸ "Catalyze a More Humane Future," Center for Humane Technology, accessed September 14, 2022, <https://humanetech.com/>.

³⁹ Jean-Claude Larchet and Archibald Andrew Torrance, *The New Media Epidemic: The Undermining of Society, Family, and Our Own Soul* (Jordanville, NY: Holy Trinity Publications, The Printshop of St Job of Pochaev, Holy Trinity Monastery, 2019), 24ff.

least a good start.

- **Make a conscious adult decision about what you carry.** I would recommend choosing between three primary options:
 - **Keep a smartphone, but be sure that you are the one in charge.** This is the option I go with, but only after not carrying a cell phone when they were becoming common, and have less plugged-in days of only checking email once per day. I do more frequent usage, and think that checking it once per hour is also a good baseline, but I only check things more frequently when I have a specific logistical reason. The strongest reason for this may be less the inner logic of dominating your technology, than smartphones being socially mandated.
 - **Don't carry a smartphone.** Kings, emperors, popes and bishops before the twentieth century lived in great luxury without having any kind of phone access, ever. They weren't deprived. You most likely don't need it.
 - **Carry alternate gear.** What about, instead of carrying a smartphone, you carry a standalone GPS, an old-school handset that

only does talk and text with a numeric keypad, a paper planner or a small paper pad for your scheduling, todo, and scratchpad use, and maybe a book or Kindle? That sounds like a lot, but it fits nicely, with room to spare, in my favorite messenger bag. Admittedly these things are not the same convergence device, but it really may be possible to carry everything you want without difficulty. And by the way, their not including social media isn't a defect; it's a feature.

- **Read *The New Media Epidemic: The Undermining of Society, Family, and Our Own Soul*, and *The Luddite's Guide to Technology*.** Pay close attention to the rules in *The New Media Epidemic* as taken from Silicon Valley tech Moms and Dads. Chapter 13 is rich in practical application, mentions a #1 rule of “no phones in bedrooms ever,” and “Alex Constantinople... said her youngest son, who is 5, is never allowed to use gadgets during the week, and her older children, 10 to 13, are only allowed 30 minutes a day on school nights.”⁴⁰ Not an absolutely different rule from what my parents had for me. Other aspects covered include having the network's router shut off outside of a certain

⁴⁰ Jean-Claude Larchet and Archibald Andrew Torrance, *The New Media Epidemic: The Undermining of Society, Family, and Our Own Soul* (Jordanville, NY: Holy Trinity Publications, The Printshop of St Job of Pochaev, Holy Trinity Monastery, 2019), Chapter 13: Prevention and Treatment

window of time.

- **Take an attitude of “ ‘All things are lawful for me,’—*maybe*, but all things are not expedient: ‘all things are lawful for me,’—*maybe*, but all things edify not.”** We are tempted to try to get the most use out of our investment, when a better use might be more sparing. As far as TV goes, I have sought out to see one Simpsons episode in the past five or so years. Somewhere along the way, I stopped seeing as much television as I was allowed. Don't use as much as you will let yourself use, and recognize that the most beneficial uses are sometimes the ones with the lightest touch. A smartphone in “Do Not Disturb” mode is just as much capable of calling 911 in a bad situation as any other cell phone.
- **Have an attitude of having a life outside of online activity.** When I grew up, I was taught to cast a line with a fishing rod. I didn't end up catching much of anything, but my father taught me the basics, face-to-face, with a genuine fishing rod. Young people today are far more likely to learn to cast a line with the accelerometer on a smartphone, and that was a deprivation. I did my studies through travelling to campuses face-to-face even if I used email as well. This is a human baseline that is a survival from the Middle Ages, for that matter a survival from the animal world

where young wolves are not handed tools necessarily but are taught how to interact with their environment to hunt, face-to-face with other wolves. And I would suggest that traveling to a college campus and also using some email is a pretty good baseline for technology use. And in relation to this, we have:

- **Take up a hobby and give smartphones some competition.** It can be hard to just pull back from habitual technology use. It is somewhat easier, even if it is not really easy, to pull back from the draw of technology and engage in something else, such as candle making. Having a constructive hobby can be very helpful as something else to do instead. (I have a simple hobby recommendation engine at <https://cjshayward.com/hobby/>.⁴¹ It might be helpful to you.)
- **Use your phone for a purpose, and never to treat boredom.** A practice of reaching for your phone when you need it to do something, and not much else, can be great. Your phone can be genuinely nice when you use it to contact an acquaintance by any means, or to order a pair of shoes. It's a trap when you use it to just pass time or make boredom easier to deal with. The most miserable use of Facebook, for instance, is when

⁴¹ C.J.S. Hayward, "Help Me Find a Hobby!," CJS Hayward, November 6, 2019, <https://cjshayward.com/hobby/>.

you're on it for hours.

- **Use older technologies, including older space-conquering technologies, and fast from technologies.** Fasting from technologies is explored in “A Guide to Technology’s Hidden Price Tags,” and while it may not be possible, there are times where you can make a phone call instead of sending an email, or drive to see someone face-to-face instead of making a phone call. (Maybe call, email, or text to make an appointment for a face-to-face visit first, though.) In general, using older space-conquering technologies instead of newer space-conquering technologies can uncover a forgotten richness. Some have had days of no electricity. A Lead Pencil Society day here and there can produce just a little freedom, or even just write a single hand-written, lead-pencil letter to a loved one, or perhaps buy a single, paper book instead of an ebook.
- **Treat porn as a real danger, and get help whenever you need it.** Porn is the disenchantment of the entire universe; it is our day’s biggest attack on men; it is preparation for committing rape. Take things to a father confessor; use a support group; use **XXXchurch.com**.⁴²

⁴² Carl Thomas, Anna Waters, and Andrew J. Bauman, “XXXchurch:

- **Don't look at your phone as a treasure from a magic world.** A phone can feel exotic until you're already hooked, but I think of people in the second world where a smartphone may seem a relic from the wonderland of the first world. In fact the U.S. may have more seeking of escape than Uganda. In fact material treasure may be found much more easily in the U.S.—and with it spiritual poverty. I believe that smartphones have uses, but as an experience they are not really helpful if you're an American, and not really helpful if you're a Ugandan either. There are uses, and you can do things, like read ebooks for instance, which are really sweet. However, being sucked into a phone is not really a helpful way of using it. On those grounds I would advise friends both in the U.S. and Uganda to use phones, maybe, but know that God has placed people around you, and a person is infinitely better than a smartphone. Enjoy the real treasures!

All of this may seem like a lot, but it is very simple at heart:

Start walking on the path and put one foot in front of the other.

That is all you need.

Discussion questions for “How Can I Take My Life Back from my Phone?”

1. What would you most like to change about your cell phone use?
2. What can you do to act on that desire?
3. What would be the benefits to you to achieve greater mastery over your cell phone use?
4. What positives does your phone use give to your life?
5. What negatives does your phone use give to your life?
6. What new things have you learned about how to achieve freedom from your phone?
7. What did you already know that would be helpful?

8. How can you combine this article with what you know to work together?
9. What would you like to get rid of today?

Introduction to “The *Silicon* Rule”

The *Silicon* Rule

One kind of ethical gem that can be very valuable is a question, statement, premise, etc. that is quite simple but sheds light on a wide variety of situations. The classic, quintessential example of such a gem is the Golden Rule: “Do unto others what you would have them do unto you.” Most or possibly nearly all world religions have some form of this concept.

The *Silicon* Rule proposed in this article is, like another mentioned ethical gem, one that may require a bit of context.

It looks at what technology decisions technology executives really make when the rubber hits the road.

The *Silicon* Rule

I have stated, in “A Guide to Technology’s Hidden Price Tags”, later in this collection, a lot of theory and analysis. I would like now to give some of what I practice myself.

Taking a second look at asking, “What would Jesus do?”

I looked down upon on the “What would Jesus do?” fashion when it was hot, and I have never had nor wanted a pair of W.W.J.D. Christian socks; for that matter, I have never asked that question. However, now much later, I wish to offer a word in its defense.

The Golden Rule, “*Do unto others as you would have them do unto you,*”⁴³ is not just a directive from the Bible; most or all world religions at least touch on it. And in terms of the disciplines of ethics it is very interesting in that is a simple and short ethical directive that sheds quite a lot of light over a very broad collection of situations. That’s a feat in formulating ethics. Furthermore, it is also a feat represented by W.W.J.D. If you read the Bible regularly at all, the question “What would Jesus do?” brings clarity to many situations.

⁴³ Classic paraphrase of Matthew 7:12.

Additionally, I would like to provide another rule.

The *Silicon* Rule

The Silicon Rule, as I propose it, is a rule for guiding technology choices:

“What do Silicon Valley technology executives choose for their children?”

Now, “What would Jesus do?” is only meaningful if you have some picture of what Jesus was like, and “What do Silicon Valley technology executives choose for their children?” may surprise you, although a search for “humane tech” might hit paydirt.

Jean-Claude Larchet, towards the end of his must-read *The New Media Epidemic: The Undermining of Society, Family, and Our Own Soul*, talks about a fashionable private school and quotes glimpses of the private lives offered to children of Silicon Valley technology executives in Steve Bilton’s summary:⁴⁴

The Waldorf School of the Peninsula, in the heart of Silicon Valley, is rare in that it is not connected [to the Internet]. Three quarters of the pupils are children whose parents work in the area, with Google, Apple, Yahoo, or Hewlett-Packard. These people who work to

⁴⁴ Jean-Claude Larchet and Archibald Andrew Torrance, *The New Media Epidemic: The Undermining of Society, Family, and Our Own Soul* (Jordanville, NY: Holy Trinity Publications, The Printshop of St Job of Pochaev, Holy Trinity Monastery, 2019, Chapter 13: Prevention and Treatment).

develop the digital economy and propagate it into every level of society are especially glad that in this school, their offspring are completely sheltered from computers, tablets, and smartphones right up till eighth grade.

“So, your kids must love the iPad?” I asked Mr. Jobs [...]. The company’s first tablet was just hitting the shelves. “They haven’t used it,” he told me. “We limit how much technology our kids use at home.”...

Evan Williams, a founder of Blogger, Twitter and Medium, and his wife, Sara Williams, said that in lieu of iPads, their two young boys have hundreds of books (yes, physical ones) that they can pick up and read any time.

So how do tech moms and dads determine the proper boundary for their children? In general, it is set by age.

Children under 10 seem to be most susceptible to becoming addicted, so these parents draw the line at not allowing any gadgets during the week. On weekends, there are limits of 30 minutes to 2 hours on iPad and smart-phone use. And 10- to 14-year-olds are allowed to use computers on school nights, but only for homework.

“We have a strict no screen time during the

week rule for our kids,” said Lesley Gold, founder and chief executive of the SutherlandGold Group, a tech media relations and analytics company. “But you have to make allowances as they get older and need a computer for school.”

Some parents also forbid teenagers from using social networks, except for services like Snapchat, which deletes messages after they have been sent. This way they don’t have to worry about saying something online that will haunt them later in life, one executive told me.

Although some non-tech parents I know give smartphones to children as young as 8, many who work in tech wait until their child is 14. While these teenagers can make calls and text, they are not given a data plan until 16. But there is one rule that is universal among the tech parents I polled.

“This is rule No. 1: There are no screens in the bedroom: There are no screens in the bedroom. Period. Ever,” Mr. Anderson said. [...]

I never asked Mr. Jobs what his children did instead of using the gadgets he built, so I reached out to Walter Isaacson, the author of “Steve Jobs,” who spent a lot of time at their home.

“Every evening Steve made a point of having dinner at the big long table in their kitchen, discussing books and history and a variety of these things,” he said. “No one ever seemed to pull out an iPad or computer. The kids did not seem addicted at all to devices.”

Examples could easily be multiplied, even if one is only quoting Larchet. This is, quite briefly, what Silicon Valley technology executives want for their children.

My own working model

I remember, on environmental issues, someone talking softly about how “subdue the earth” in Genesis 1 originally meant a very gentle mastery. That was everything I wanted to believe, and I’d still like it to be true, but it has been said that the Hebrew has the force of, “trample it under foot!”⁴⁵ In the Orthodox Church’s Greek Bible,⁴⁶ the word here translated as “subdue,” κατακυριω (katakurio) is the same verb that in the New Testament for how Orthodox leaders are not to relate to the rank and file, and can be translated “lord it over.” κυριος (kurios) is the basic word for “lord,” and the prefix κατα (kata) in at least some places gives the word significantly more force.

Should we lord it over the earth? That’s one thing I

⁴⁵ “Strong’s Hebrew: 3533,” Strong’s Hebrew: 3533. כָּבַשׁ (kabash) -- to subdue, bring into bondage, accessed September 14, 2022, <https://biblehub.com/hebrew/3533.htm>. The NASB rendering terms listed are “assault (1), brought them into subjection (2), forced into bondage (1), forcing (1), subdue (1), subdued (5), subjugate (1), trample (1), tread our under foot (1), under foot (1).”

⁴⁶ Genesis 1:27 LXX.

think we have done disproportionately well. However, I bring this up for a reason. I believe we can, should, and perhaps need to lord it over technology. The basis we should have for our interactions, above the assumed life in the Church and frequent reception of sacraments, is bedrock to how we should relate to technology. We should reject most use of technology along marketing positions. Possibly I will be under the authority of an abbot and be directed not to engage in electronic communication at all. For now, I have the usual technologies, apart from any working smartwatch.

One way I have tried to explain my basic attitude is as follows: most of us, most of the time, should not be calling 911. My understanding is that you can get in trouble with the law without having what the law considers appropriate justification; you don't call 911 because you're bored and you want someone to talk to. However, the single most important number you can call is 911; if you are in a medical emergency or some other major problem, being able to call 911 can be a matter of life and death.

My prescription is, in caricature, carry a smartphone but only use it when you need to call 911.

Apart from the smartphone, I try to avoid TV, movies, radio and so on. Michael in *Stranger in a Strange Land* said that he had questions about what he saw on the “g**d**-noisy-box”,⁴⁷ and I really don't think I'm losing out by not being involved in them. Television has over the years grown a heavy dose of MSG; watching even a clean movie hits me like a stiff drink. Silence is something precious, and it has been called the language of the world to come.

⁴⁷ Robert A. Heinlein, *Stranger in a Strange Land* (New York: Ace, 2018), 185.

On my smartphone, I've watched maybe a couple of dozen movies and have nothing loaded for it as an iPod. I have no games, or at least none for my own use, nor amusement apps. Its use is governed by silence, which means in large measure that it is used for logistic purposes and not used when I do not have a logistical reason to use it. I only really use part or what appears on my home screen: Gmail, Calendar, Camera, Maps, Weather, Notes, App Store, Settings, Termius (software for IT workers), GasBuddy, PNC, Kindle, Flashlight, Pedometer, Libby, Translate, FluentU (for language learning), DuckDuckGo (a privacy-enhanced web browser), Phone, mSecure (a password manager), and Text. Of those, I do not really use Camera, Weather, Notes, or Kindle.

This may sound very ascetic, but it is a spiritual equivalent of good physical health. Jerry Mander's *Four Arguments for the Elimination of Television*⁴⁸ examines artificial unusuality,⁴⁹ how we connect with the kind of stimulation we receive, and how children not stimulated by television can be stimulated by the natural world. My seemingly austere use of my phone gives me luxuries and conveniences that would have been unimaginable to emperors and popes in ancient and medieval times. Even in the nineteenth century, people were pushing the envelope on keeping toilets from smelling nasty.

One area where I am learning now is to avoid making fake or ersatz connections by computer or phone. I use Facebook and Twitter to announce new postings; arguably I

⁴⁸ Jerry Mander, *Four Arguments for the Elimination of Television* (New York: Perennial an imprint of HarperCollins Publishers, 2002).

⁴⁹ Jerry Mander, *Four Arguments for the Elimination of Television* (New York: Perennial an imprint of HarperCollins Publishers, 2002), chapter XV, 299-322.

shouldn't do even that. They are an arena for idle talking, and for fake friendship. Larchet's term for a person hollowed out by technology is "*Homo connecticus*," Man the Connected.⁵⁰ There are numerous ways to be connected, all the time, in a way that is simply not helpful, and in fact an intravenous drip of noise. If I do not have an active conversation, I check my email by default about once an hour; though this might not be a good idea, I have turned off all sound notifications for text messages. In previous years, I had gone on "net.vacations" and avoided computers and electronic communication for a few days; more recently I have sometimes kept my phone on a permanent "Do not disturb."⁵¹ As far as my social life, I meet people (and cats) face-to-face when I can.

I also almost categorically try to avoid exposure to advertising, almost as if it were porn; both are intended to stimulate unhelpful desire. I tend to be a lot less likely to covet something and spend tight money on things I don't need. If I need something only after an advertiser paints ownership beautifully, chances are pretty good I don't need it.

All of this is how, in the concrete, I have tried to trample technology underfoot, and really trample its marketing proposition. This is something of a countercultural use, but it works remarkably well, and if

⁵⁰ Jean-Claude Larchet and Archibald Andrew Torrance, *The New Media Epidemic: The Undermining of Society, Family, and Our Own Soul* (Jordanville, NY: Holy Trinity Publications, The Printshop of St Job of Pochaev, Holy Trinity Monastery, 2019). The term is a leitmotif throughout the text.

⁵¹ I found that if I turned on Do Not Disturb but did not turn it off, it would turn off anyway perhaps the next day. So I added a scheduled Do Not Disturb from 12:01 AM to 11:59 PM, and effectively have a Do Not Disturb that will stay on as long as I want.

you can rein in yourself, it won't suck out so much of your blood.

What is the advantage of having a phone then? Wouldn't it be simpler to not own one? I personally think there is much to commend about not owning a smartphone, but it is a socially mandated technology. You should be able to get along well enough to have a paper planner and pad and a standalone GPS to navigate by, but this is how to skim the cream off of technology and not hurt yourself with its murkier depths.

All of this may sound excessively ascetic, or a feat that it isn't. Feel free to chalk it up to eccentricity or introversion. However, I would point out that the conversations in Silicon Valley technology executive's houses are quite lively. For example, here are eleven things you might do, or start doing.

1. Read a book by yourself.
2. Read a book and discuss it with others.
3. Take up a new hobby, like woodworking. You can make a lot of interesting things woodworking.
4. Go to an Orthodox church. After that, take a breather and go to a museum or a library.
5. Pick one topic and research it as far as you can in a fixed number of days. Share with others what you learned.
6. Buy a pair of binoculars and take up bird watching. Please note that local conservation

society members, park districts, possibly libraries, and so on, may have excellent advice on how to get involved.

7. Spend an hour in silence, just sit, and unwind.
8. Use older technologies and practices. Drive to visit someone instead of calling. Call instead of texting. Watch old 1950's movies that are at an "F" on special effects but an "A" on plot and storytelling. Go outside and play catch with a ball or frisbee.
9. Take a walk or a hike, or fish up a bicycle and take bike rides for fun.
10. Have a conversation about everything and nothing.

Trample technologies underfoot as much as it takes to have a life.

How to get there

What I have listed above is more a destination than a means how. As far as "how" goes, the basic method is to start whittling away at your consumption of noise bit by bit. If you watch television, you might decide in advance what you want to watch, and stick to only shows you've picked out. After that, vote one show per week off the island (maybe one show per month would stick better), until there is only one show, and then cut into the days you watch it.

That is much more effective than through sheer force of will to stop watching together until you binge and decide you can't live without it. And the same principle applies with other things.

Start voting apps off the island, too!

An Orthodox priest can be very good at helping you taper down and stop activities, and another perspective can really help. If you want to stick with a book, Tito Colliander's *The Way of the Ascetics: The Ancient Tradition of Inner and Spiritual Growth* displays the discipline well⁵². However, a real, live encounter with an Orthodox priest gives a valuable second set of eyes, and making the pilgrimage and overcoming a bit of shyness are two good things you should want to have.

One P.S. about motivation

My main motivation in writing this is for you and your spiritual health. Now it might also be good for your body to stop vegetating with your smartphone and start doing things, and it might also be beneficial for the environment in that it encourages a much lighter step in consumption.

Would you take one small step, for yourself?

What you can do to tame your phone

Popes and bishops, kings and princes have lived

⁵² Tito Colliander, Ferré Katherine, and Kenneth Leech, *Way of the Ascetics: The Ancient Tradition of Discipline and Inner Growth* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2003).

without ever using a cell phone once.

This section is meant to be a grab bag of techniques that might be helpful, added, dropped, or adapted according to your current need. I kept my phone turned off until I was more disengaged, and have not subsequently felt the need to return—but I do not regard it as in any sense wasted effort. I am fully willing to keep my phone off again should I need it again.

What not to do with your phone

A phone becomes tamer when you stop using it to palliate boredom. If you use a phone for entertainment, only such things will be attractive to you. Be in contact with your surroundings, other people, and nature, and you will be sensitized to the quite different things they will have to attract you.

It can also be of benefit to only check social media from a laptop or desktop computer. That creates a bit of distance and can help curb your usage.

Keep your phone turned off most of the time.

One option is to carry your phone with you, but turned off. When you specifically need to use it, turn the phone, use it (perhaps to navigate by GPS), and turn it off when you do not need to use it. The delightful inconvenience will help you realize when you are reaching for your phone while you don't need it.

Break apart the bundle and unbundle what a phone offers.

A phone is a tremendous convergence device, but we do not need all it has to offer.

The term “killer app” in information technology means a use or application of the technology that makes using that technology not really optional. One killer app for phone use is GPS... but you can buy a standalone GPS.

You can also have a standalone pad of paper, and a standalone camera if you want—although toting a camera may help you realize how little you need it.

It is possible, though this is not too well advertised, to get a phone plan that includes talk and text but no data plan. That gets you the benefits of an old-school cellphone without all the bells and whistles that come with the newer one.

You can still, as I write, find “dumb phones” at <https://dumbphones.pory.app/>. <https://sunbeamwireless.com/> offers a flipphone with a GPS but no terribly easy way to get a browser. *Smart!*

Buy a used, pre-5G smartphone such as (as I write) you can still find on eBay.

A lot of people I’ve talked with are wary of 5G as a different approach with a unique potential to fry us and possibly compromise our immune system.

Turn off biometric identification and have as long of a passcode as you can.

Biometric identification saves you an inconvenience, and here also, making things just a little more inconvenient can help.

Downgrade to a limited plan.

With my present carrier, I have a limited talk + text + data plan. Now it helps that there are some things I only do when I am attached to a wireless network (podcasts and other data-intensive work), but I find that I am making slightly more modest use of my phone when in the back of my mind I use talk + text + data with the realization every data use is coming out of a finite and limited resource.

Discussion questions for “*The Silicon Rule*:”

1. What kind of technology decisions do Silicon Valley technology executives make for their children?
2. What kind of specific phone decisions do Silicon Valley leaders make for their children?
3. What kind of technology decisions would you like for your children, if you have children?
4. What kind of technology decisions would you like for yourself?
5. Which of the details provided in this broad rule seem most salient to you?
6. How much choice do you think you have in your technology choices?
7. Where are some areas where you might have more freedom than you realize?

8. What can you do next to live the kind of life Silicon Valley technology executives want for their children?

Introduction to “55 New Maxims for the Cyber-Quarantine”

Fr. Tom Hopko created a priceless “55 Maxims for the Christian Life”⁵³ that succeed in packing an astonishing summary of Orthodox living in just 55 simple maxims.

This piece is not its equal and its longest entries are do not come near the crystalline simplicity of almost anything in Fr. Tom’s list.

Nonetheless, people seem to find a list of 55 maxims to be eminently relatable and this list is based on the popularity and effective communication represented by this gem.

This text is placed as a transition from the overall big questions perspective discussed in the previous chapter and on subsequent chapters that include much more focused

53 Fr. Thomas Hopko, “55 Maxims of the Christian Life,” 55 Maxims of the Christian Life - Fr. Thomas Hopko - Holy Cross Orthodox Church, accessed September 14, 2022, <https://holycrossoca.org/newslet/0907.html>.

attention to addictive cell phones.

55 New Maxims for the Cyber-Quarantine

(Note: Some of this is old and some of this is new. I'm not seeking to be original.)

1. Trust technology about as far as you can throw it, and remember that you can't throw software or the web.
2. When facing a situation, ask, "What would a Boomer do?"
3. If your priest is willing, ask for pastoral guidance in slowly but steadily withdrawing from technologies that hurt you. (Don't try to leap over buildings in one bound. Take one step at a time, and one day at a time.)
4. Practice the spiritual disciplines: prayer, fasting, generosity, church attendance, the sacraments, silence, etc.
5. Use older technologies.

6. Fast from technologies some of the time, especially on fasting days.
7. Use your phone only for logistics, never for games, entertainment, or killing time. (You cannot kill time without injuring eternity.) That, and be sparing about using your phone for research.
8. Unplug your intravenous drip of noise, little by little. It may be uncomfortable at first, but it's worth it.
9. Own and read paper.
10. Leave your phone at home some days.
11. Read *The New Media Epidemic*.⁵⁴
12. Read *The Luddite's Guide to Technology*⁵⁵ or this book, with particular attention to "The Consolation of Theology."
13. Minimize or cut out completely your use of anti-social media. (By the way, spending time sucked into Facebook is a good way to enter a depression.)
14. Read up on Humane Tech

⁵⁴ Jean-Claude Larchet and Archibald Andrew Torrance, *The New Media Epidemic: The Undermining of Society, Family, and Our Own Soul* (Jordanville, NY: Holy Trinity Publications, The Printshop of St Job of Pochaev, Holy Trinity Monastery, 2019).

⁵⁵ C.J.S Hayward, *The Luddite's Guide to Technology* (Wheaton, IL: CJS Hayward Publications, 2014).

(<https://HumaneTech.com/>)⁵⁶ and advice for how to take control

(<https://www.HumaneTech.com/take-control>),⁵⁷ but do not limit yourself to that.

15. Do not own a television.
16. Do not feed the trolls.
17. Choose face-to-face meetings over Zoom meetings if you have a choice, and Zoom over any instant messaging.
18. Consider screen time, and multitasking, to be a drain on the mindfulness we are seeking from the East because we have rejected it in the West.
19. Turn off all phone notifications if you have a live option to do.
20. Look at your phone when it rings or buzzes. Do not check your phone unprovoked every five minutes to see if you missed a text.
21. When you are reading on the web, don't just scan the page. Read it, like a paper book, slowly.
22. When you type, type full words, not txtisms.

⁵⁶ "Catalyze a More Humane Future." Center for Humane Technology. Accessed September 14, 2022. <https://humanetech.com/>.

⁵⁷ "Catalyze a More Humane Future." Center for Humane Technology. Accessed September 14, 2022. <https://humanetech.com/>.

23. Don't trade your adequate, existing, working gadgets for the latest and hottest gadget.
24. Set a fixed bedtime, and then lights out is lights out.
25. Keep and charge your phone in some room that is away from your bedroom.
26. If you use porn, stop. If you find yourself unable to stop, bring it to confession, and seriously consider XXXchurch.com.
27. Do not store up treasures on earth, but own and use technology only so far as it advances the Kingdom of Heaven.
28. Live by a Silicon Rule of, "What technologies do Silicon Valley technology executives choose for their children?" Steve Jobs, for instance, gave his kids walls of paper books and animated discussion, and so far as I am aware no iPads.
29. Reject contraception and Splenda.
30. Shop in real, local stores, even a local Wal-Mart, rather than making Amazon your first port of call.
31. "Hang the fashions. Buy only what you need."⁵⁸

⁵⁸ Richard J. Foster, *In Celebration of Discipline: The Path to Spiritual Growth: Special Anniversary Edition Featuring Two New Essays*, Hodder and Stoughton 2008, 90.

32. When you want to go shopping like some feel-good sacrament, do not buy it. You may buy it after you've let go of coveting after it and probably let go of buying it at all, and not before.
33. Limit your consumption of TED talks, and recognize them, alongside psychology, as something of a secular religion. (But if you need help, "Get help, without fear or shame."⁵⁹)
34. Write snailmail letters, preferably with your own handwriting.
35. Recognize that from the Devil's perspective, "The Internet is for porn"⁶⁰—and he may have helped inspire, guide, and shape its development.
36. Expect Amazon and Google Books to delist priceless treasures. (This is already happening.)
37. Cultivate the virtues.
38. Cultivate social skills, especially for face-to-face situations.

⁵⁹ Fr. Thomas Hopko, "55 Maxims of the Christian Life," 55 Maxims of the Christian Life - Fr. Thomas Hopko - Holy Cross Orthodox Church, accessed September 14, 2022, <https://holycrossoca.org/newslet/0907.html>, maxim 55.

⁶⁰ "The Internet is for porn" is a viral Sesame Street parody with a catchy, Sesame Street-style tune with multiple performances on YouTube. See DaVinciReloaded, "The Internet Is for Porn Avenue Q Original - Video," YouTube (YouTube, November 20, 2007), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T-TA57Lokuc>.

39. If your conscience and applicable law permit, maybe consider owning and learning to use a gun. It's safer to have most criminals and some law-abiding citizens be armed than to have only criminals be armed.
40. Seek theosis in the acquisition of the Spirit.
41. When shopping, use a debit card before a credit card, and use cash before either one if you have a choice. Giving away paper bills and wondering what to do with change is a partial deterrent to buying things you do not need.⁶¹
42. Never form an identity around the brands you patronize, and do not adopt a personal brand.
43. If you have the luxury, check email once per day. If your job or obligations do not permit a literal once per day checking of email, check it as often as you must. (If that is once per hour, don't keep checking your watch, but set an hourly alarm bell to remind you.)
44. Limit new technological intrusions into your life.
45. Repent of your sins.
46. Read aloud some of the time.

⁶¹ See, for instance, Erin Hurd, "Credit Cards Can Make You Spend More, but It's Not the Full Story," NerdWallet, accessed September 14, 2022, <https://www.nerdwallet.com/article/credit-cards/credit-cards-make-you-spend-more>.

47. Cultivate connection with nature.
48. Drop your phone and drive.⁶²
49. Drop your phone and pay attention to the person you're with.
50. Keep good posture and take steps to avoid the diseases of civilization. Some approaches that have been taken to all be important include using Paleo diet (with fasts, eating vegetables in lieu of grain and saving bread for ceremonial purposes) and exercise, have a balanced ratio of Omega-3 to Omega-6 fatty acids, get real sleep, have engaging activities, and have social interactions.
51. Do not be surprised if you live to see the Antichrist rise to power, and recognize that we are already in an apocalyptic singularity.
52. Learn survival skills.
53. Recognize that it will be easier to get the people out of the cyber-quarantine than to get the cyber-quarantine, our new home, out of the people.
54. Keep a reasonable amount of cash available, at home or in a money belt.

⁶² Messages delivered on Chicago area highways said "Drop it and drive" with a later clarification of "'Drop it and drive' means your phone, not your trash."

55. Read, and live, Fr. Tom Hopko's 55 Maxims.⁶³

⁶³ Meaning Fr. Thomas Hopko, "55 Maxims of the Christian Life," 55 Maxims of the Christian Life - Fr. Thomas Hopko - Holy Cross Orthodox Church, accessed September 14, 2022, <https://holycrossoca.org/newslet/0907.html>.

Discussion questions for “55 New Maxims for the Cyber-Quarantine:”

1. What have you already done to limit technology’s dominion over your life?
2. What would you like to do next?
3. Are you with your present use of technology and its effects? If you are not, what choices and alternatives do you have?
4. What is your favorite of Fr. Tom Hopko’s original 55 maxims?
5. Are there any of these 55 new maxims that strike you as helpful?
6. What of these maxims challenge you?
7. What lifestyle changes, perhaps one or two for

now, might you adopt to be less domineered by technology?

8. One quote falsely attributed to C.S. Lewis was, “Isn’t it funny how day by day nothing changes. But when you look back, everything is different.”⁶⁴ How has your use of technology changed, for good or for bad, over the past year?
9. “Most people overestimate what they can do in one year, but underestimate what they can do in ten years.”⁶⁵ What is a modest goal you might reach in one year? What might you achieve in ten years?

⁶⁴ William O’Flaherty, “(CCSLQ-33) – Isn’t It Funny,” Essential C.S. Lewis, February 10, 2020, <https://essentialcslewis.com/2017/03/04/ccslq-33-isnt-it-funny/>.

⁶⁵ Richard J. Foster, *In Celebration of Discipline: The Path to Spiritual Growth: Special Anniversary Edition Featuring Two New Essays*, n.d., 107.

Introduction to “A Guide to Technology’s Hidden Price Tags”

This collection gives pride of place to dealing with cell phone that have the Frankenstein-like attributes of our having created a monster, and are arguably more Frankenstein-like than foods using GMOs that are rightly termed “Frankenfoods.” The #1 intended takeaway is reduced takeover of our lives from our phones.

It can still be worthwhile to look at the broader technological picture and its implications. That is what this work, originally titled “The Luddite’s Guide to Technology,” is exactly written to do.

(That’s the article. The book that has it for a title chapter, *The Luddite’s Guide to Technology*, is advisable if you get to the end of this book and wish there were more.)

How we relate to cell phones specifically, and how we relate to technology in general, are two sides of the same coin, and covering the other side of the coin is also helpful for immediate concerns with cell phones.

Cell phone use is a microcosm of our total relationship with technologies.

A Guide to Technology's Hidden Price Tags

Since the Bridegroom was taken from the disciples, it has been a part of the Orthodox Church's practice to fast. What is expected in the ideal has undergone changes, and one's own practice is done in submission to one's priest. The priest may work on how to best relax rules in many cases so that your fasting is a load you can shoulder. There is something of a saying, "As always, ask your priest," and that goes for fasting from technology, too, meaning, specifically, that if you read this article and want to start fasting from technologies, and your priest says that it won't be helpful, leave this article alone and follow your priest's guidance.

From ancient times, there has been a sense that we need to transcend ourselves. When we fast, we choose to set limits and master our belly, at least partly. " 'Meats for the belly, and the belly for foods'—*maybe*, but God shall destroy both it and them."⁶⁶ So the Apostle answered the hedonists of his day. The teaching of fasting is that you are more than the sum of your appetites, and we can grow by giving something up in days and seasons. And really fasting from foods is not saying, "I choose to be greater than this

⁶⁶ I Corinthians 6:13, Classic Orthodox Bible, altered.

particular luxury,” but “I choose to be greater than this necessity.” Modern technology has not existed for over 99% of the time humans have been around: Christ and his disciples reached far and wide without the benefit of even the most obsolete of today’s electronic communication technologies. Monks have often turned back on what luxuries were available to them: hence in works like the *Philokalia*⁶⁷ or the *Ladder*⁶⁸ they extol the virtue of sleeping on the floor. If we fast from technologies, we do not abstain from basic nourishment, but what emperors and kings never heard of. At one monastery where monks lived in cells without running water or electricity, a monk commented that peasants and for that matter kings lived their whole lives without tasting these, or finding them a necessity. (Even Solomon in all his splendor did not have a Facebook page.)

In Orthodoxy, if a person is not able to handle the quasi-vegan diet in fasting periods, a priest may relax the fast, not giving carte blanche to eat anything the parishioner wants, but suggesting that the parishioner relax the fast to some degree, eating some fish or an egg. This basic principle of fasting is applicable to technology: rather than immediately go cold turkey on certain technologies, use “some fish or an egg” in terms of older technologies. Instead of texting for a conversation, drive over to a nearby friend.

(Have you ever noticed that during Lent many Orthodox Christians cut down or eliminate their use of Facebook?)

Donald Knuth, one of the leading lights in computer

⁶⁷ Palmer G.E.H., KALLISTOS Ware, and Philip Sherrard, trans., *The Philokalia* (London: Faber and Faber, 1979).

⁶⁸ St. John Climacus, *The Ladder of Divine Ascent* (Boston, MA: Holy Transfiguration Monastery, 2019).

science, got rid of his email address well over a decade ago. He said that email was good for being on top of the world, and what he wanted was to be at the bottom of the world and do research. In other words, he had certain goals, and he found that email was not a helpful luxury in reaching those goals. Knuth is also a (non-Orthodox) Christian.

As mentioned in “Technonomicon,”⁶⁹ what we call space-conquering technologies might slightly more appropriately be called body-conquering technologies, because they neutralize some of the limitations of our embodied state. The old wave of space-conquering technologies moves people faster or farther than they could move themselves, and older science fiction and space opera often portrays bigger and better versions of this kind of space conquering technologies: personal jet packs, cars that levitate (think Luke Skywalker’s land speeder), or airplanes that function as spacecraft (his X-Wing). What is interesting to me here is that they serve as bigger and better versions of the older paradigm of space-conquering technologies, even if Luke remains in radio contact with the Rebel base. That is the older paradigm. The newer paradigm is technologies that make one’s physical location irrelevant, or almost irrelevant: cell phones, texting, Facebook, and remote work, are all not bigger and better ways to move your body, but bigger and better ways to do things in a mind-based context where the location of your body may be collected as in Google Plus, but your actual, physical location is really neither here nor there.

My own technology choices

69 C.J.S. Hayward, “Technonomicon: Technology, Nature, Ascesis,” CJS Hayward, March 4, 2020, <https://cjshayward.com/technonomicon/>.

I have a maxed-out Getac x500, an armored computer that is intended to quite plausibly still be running when the original owner has grown middle-aged, grown old, or died of old age. It may be stolen from me but it is purchased in the intent of not needing to buy a laptop again. It runs Windows 10 natively and for 99% of the time, it is running virtual Linux Mint as well. My point in mentioning it here is that I did not purchase it as the hot, coolest new thing, but as a last hurrah of an old guard. The top two applications I use are Google Chrome and the Linux terminal, and the old-fashioned laptop lets me take advantage of the full power of the Unix command line, and lets me exercise root privilege without voiding the warranty. For a Unix wizard, that's a lot of power. And I realized this might be my only opportunity in a while to purchase a tool I want to use for a long while.

Laptops might continue to be around for a while, and desktops for that matter, but their place is a bit like landline phones. If you have a desk job, you will probably have a desktop computer and a landline, but the wave of the future is smartphones and tablets; the hot, coolest new thing is not a bulky, heavy MacBook, but whatever the current generation of iPad or Android-based tablet is. One youngster said, "Email is for old people," and perhaps the same is to be said of laptops.

I also have an iPhone 8 Plus, which I want to keep running as long as I can hold on to it, as a working iPhone that uses 4G instead of 5G. I upgraded from one of the original iPhones to an iPhone 4, not because I needed to have the latest new thing, but because my iPhone was necessarily on an AT&T contract, and however much they may advertise that the EDGE network my iPhone was on

was “twice the speed of dialup,” I found when jobhunting that a simple, short “thank you” letter after an interview took amazingly many minutes for my phone to send, at well below the speed of obsolete dial-up speeds I had growing up: AT&T throttled the bandwidth to an incredibly slow rate and I got a newer iPhone with Verizon which I want to hold on to, even though there is a newer and hotter model available. But I am making conscious adult decisions about using the iPhone: I have sent perhaps a dozen texts, and have not used the iPod functionality. I use it, but I draw lines. My point is not exactly that you should adopt the exact same conscious adult decisions as I do about how to use a smartphone, but that you make a conscious adult decision in the first place.

And lastly, I have another piece of older technology: a SwissChamp XLT, the smallest Swiss Army Knife that includes all the functionality of a SwissChamp while also having the functionality of a Cybertool.

I mention these technologies not to sanction what may or may not be owned—I tried to get as good a computer as I could partly because I am an IT professional, and I am quite grateful that my employer let me use it for the present contract. I also drive a 2008 Ford Escape But with this as with other technologies, I haven’t laid the reins on the horse’s neck. I only use a well-chosen fragment of my iPhone’s capabilities, and I try not to use it too much: I like to be able to use the web without speed being much of an issue, but I’m not on the web all the time. I have never thought “My wheels are my freedom;” I try to drive insofar as it advances some particular goal.

And I’m not aware of the brands too much. When I wrote this I didn’t really know what brands my clothing are,

with one exception, Hanes, which I am aware of predominantly because the brand name is sewed in large, hard-to-miss letters at the top.

And I observe that technologies are becoming increasingly “capture-proof”. Put simply, all technologies can be taken away from us physically, but technologies are increasingly becoming something that FEMA can shut off from far away, in a heartbeat. All network functionality on smartphones and tablets are at the mercy of network providers and whoever has control over them; more broadly, “The network is the computer,” as Sun announced slightly prematurely in its introduction of Java. My own Unix-centric use of my Mac on train rides, without having or wanting it to have internet access during the train ride, may not be much more than a historical curiosity.

But the principle of fasting from technology is fine, and if we can abstain from foods on certain days, we can also abstain from or limit technologies on certain days. Furthermore, there is real merit in knowing how to use older technologies. GPS devices can fail to pick up a signal. A trucker’s atlas works fine even if there’s no GPS signal available.

The point of this soliloquy

The reason I am writing is that I am not aware of too many works on how to use technology ascetically. St. Paul wrote, “But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and garments let us be

therewith content.”⁷⁰ This statement of necessities does not include shelter, let alone “a rising standard of living” (meaning more things that one uses). Perhaps it is OK to have a car; it is what is called “socially mandated”, meaning that there are many who one cannot buy groceries or get to their jobs without a car. Perhaps a best rule of thumb here is, to repeat another author, “Hang the fashions. Buy only what you need.”⁷¹ It is a measure by which I have real failings. And don’t ask, “Can we afford what we need?”, but “Do we need what we can afford?” If we only purchase things that have real ascetical justification, there’s something better than investing for the left-over money: we can give to the poor as an offering to Christ. Christ will receive our offering as a loan.

Some years ago I wanted to write “The Luddite’s Guide to Technology,” and I simply stopped because I realized I wasn’t writing anything good or worthy of the title. But note the attitude of the Church Fathers given the technology of the day: monasticism renounces all property, and the faithful are called to renounce property in their hearts even if they have possessions. Monastic literature warns the monk of seeking out old company, where “old company” does not mean enticement to sexual sin exactly, but one’s very own kin. The solitary and coenobetic alike cut ties to an outside world, even ties one would think were sacrosanct (and the Bible has much to say about caring for one’s elders). If a monk’s desire to see his father or brother is considered a temptation to sin that will dissipate monastic energy, what do we have to make of social media?

⁷⁰ I Timothy 6:6-8, Classic Orthodox Bible.

⁷¹ Richard J. Foster, *In Celebration of Discipline: The Path to Spiritual Growth: Special Anniversary Edition Featuring Two New Essays*, Hodder and Stoughton 2008, 90.

The friendships that are formed are of a different character from face-to-face relationships. If monks are forbidden to return to their own kin as shining example, in what light do we see texting, email, IM's, and discussion forums? If monks are forbidden to look at women's faces for fear of sexual temptation, what do we make of an internet where the greatest assault on manhood, porn, comes out to seek you even if you avoid it? It's a bit like a store that sells food, household supplies, and cocaine: and did I mention that the spammers driving you to sample a little bit of cocaine are much pushier than those offering a biscuit and dip sample?

The modern Athonite tradition at least has Luddite leanings; Athos warns against national identification numbers and possibly computers, and one saint wrote apocalyptically about people eating eight times as much as people used to eat (has anyone read "The Supersizing of America"⁷²?) and of "wisdom" being found that would allow people to swim like fish deep into the sea (we have two technologies that can do that: SCUBA gear and submarines), and let one person speak and be heard on the other side of the world (how many technologies do we have to do that? Quite a lot).

All of this is to say that Orthodoxy has room to handle technologies carefully, and I would suggest that not all technologies are created equal.

The Guide Itself

For the different technologies presented my goal is

⁷² Barbara J. Rolls, "The Supersizing of America," *Nutrition Today* 38, no. 2 (2003): pp. 42-53, <https://doi.org/10.1097/00017285-200303000-00004>.

not exactly to point to a course of action as to suggest a conscious adult decision to make, perhaps after consulting with one's priest or spiritual father. And as is usual in Orthodoxy, the temptation for converts is to try to do way too much, too fast, at first, and then backslide when that doesn't work.

It is better to keep on stretching yourself a little.

Sometimes, perhaps most of the time, using technology in an ascetical way will be countercultural and constitute outlier usage.

Advertising

Advertising is kin to manipulation, propaganda, and pornography.

Advertising answers the question, "Was economic wealth made for man, or man for economic wealth?" by decisively saying, "Man was made for economic wealth." It leads people to buy things that are not in their best interest. If you see someone using a technology as part of a form of life that is unhelpful, the kind of thing that makes you glad to be a Luddite, you have advertising to thank for that.

Advertising stirs discontent, already a problem, and leads people to ever higher desires, much like the trap of pornography. The sin is covetousness and lust, but the core structure is the same. Advertising and pornography are closely related kin.

Advertising doesn't really sell product functionality; it sells a mystique. We may have legitimate reason to buy the product, but not the mystique. Back off on a useful purchase until we are really buying the product and not the mystique.

Alcohol

Alcohol is something where you cannot abandon your eternal vigilance. You need to be in command, or to put it differently ceaselessly domineer alcohol if you use it. This domineering is easy for some people and harder for others, and some people may be wisest to avoid the challenge.

Something of the same need exists in our use of technology. We may use certain technologies, or may not, but it is still a disaster to let the technology go wherever it wills. Sometimes and with some technologies, we may abstain. Other technologies we may domineer, even if we may find if we are faithful that “my yoke is easy and my burden is light:” establishing dominion and holding the reins may be easier when it becomes a habit. But the question with a technology we use is not, “May we use it as much as we want, or not at all?”, any more than the question about wine would be, “May we use it as much as we want, or not at all?” Proper use is disciplined. Proper use is domineering. We do not always have it spelled out what is like having one or two drinks on some day, and what is like having five or ten. Nor do we have other rules of thumb spelled out, like, “Think carefully about drinking when you have a bad mood, and don’t drink in order to fix a bad mood.”

The descriptions of various “technologies and other things” are meant to provide some sense of what the contours of technologies are, and what is like drinking one or two drinks, and what is like drinking five or ten drinks a day.

Alvin Toffler’s Future shock

Some people have said that Americans are in a constant state of “future shock,” “future shock” being understood by analogy to “culture shock”, which is a profoundly challenging state when you are in a culture that tramples assumptions you didn’t know you had. Not all of future shock is in relation to technology, but much of it is.

We think of a “rising standard of living,” meaning more unfamiliar possessions in many cases, and even if the economy itself is not a rising standard of living now, we have accepted the train of new technology adoption as progress, but there has been something in us that says, “This is choking something human.” And in a sense this has always been happening, for the older technologies as the new when the older technologies when they were new, for movies as much as augmented reality.

Neal Stevenson said, “The future is here — it’s just not evenly distributed.”⁷³

Anti-aging medicine

The Christian teaching is that life begins at conception and ends at natural death, and not that life begins at 18 and ends at 30.

The saddest moment in *The Chronicles of Narnia* comes when we hear that Her Majesty Queen Susan the Gentle is “no longer a friend of Narnia;” she is rushing as quickly as possible to the silliest age of her life, and will spend the rest of her life trying to remain at that age, which besides being absolutely impossible, is absolutely undesirable.

Quite a lot of us are afflicted by the Queen Susan syndrome, but there is a shift in anti-aging medicine and

⁷³ *The Economist*, December 4, 2003.

hormone replacement therapy. Part of the shift in assistive technologies discussed below is that assistive technologies are not just intended to do what a non-disabled person can do, so for instance a reader can read a page of a book, giving visually impaired people equivalent access to a what a sighted person could have, to pushing as far what they think is an improvement, so that scanning a barcode may not just pull up identification of the product bearing the barcode, but have augmented reality features of pulling a webpage that says much more than what a sighted person could see on the tab. One of the big tools of anti-aging medicine is hormone replacement therapy, with ads showing a grey-haired man doing pushups with a caption of, “My only regret about hormone replacement therapy is that I didn’t start it sooner,” where the goal is not to restore functionality but improve it as much as possible. And the definition of improvement may be infantile; here it appears to mean that a man who might be a member of the AARP has the same hormone levels as he did when he was 17.

One professor I had who was teaching French philosophy, discussed Utopian dreams like turning the seas to lemonade, and called these ideas “a Utopia of spoiled children.” Anti-aging medicine is not about having people better fulfill the God-ordained role of an elder, but be a virtual youth. Now I have used nutraceuticals to bring more energy and be able to create things where before I was not, and perhaps that is like anti-aging medicine that has me holding on to youthful creativity when God summons me to go further up and further in. However, everything I know about anti-aging is that it is not about helping people function gracefully in the role of an elder, but about making any things about aging optional.

In my self-absorbed “Seven-Sided Gem,”⁷⁴ I talked about one AARP magazine cover, then called *My Generation*, which I originally mistook for something GenX. In the AARP’s official magazine as I have seen it, the marketing proposition is the good news, not that it is not that *bad* to be old, but it is not that *old* to be old. The women portrayed look maybe GenX in age, and on the cover I pulled out, the person portrayed, in haircut, clothing, and posture, looked like a teenager. “Fifty and better people” may see political and other advice telling them what they can do to fight high prescription prices, but nothing I have seen in that *My Generation* issue gives the impression that they can give to their community, as elders, out of a life’s wealth of experience.

Not that there are not proper elders out there. I visited a family as they celebrated their son’s graduation, and had long conversations with my friend’s mother, and with an elderly gentleman. She wanted to hear all about what I had to say about subjects that were of mutual interest, and he talked about the wealth of stories he had as a sailor and veterinarian. In both cases I had the subtle sense of a younger person being handled masterfully by an elder, and the conversation was unequal—unequal but entirely fitting: neither of them was trying to say, “We are equal—I might as well be as young as you.”

Anti-aging medicine is not about aging well, but trying to be a virtual young person when one should be doing the serious, weighty, and profoundly important function as elders.

74 C.J.S. Hayward, “Seven-Sided Gem,” CJS Hayward, February 4, 2022, <https://cjshayward.com/gem/>.

Assistive technologies

This, at least, will seem politically incorrect: unless they have an inordinate monetary or moral cost, assistive technologies allow disabled people to function at a much higher level than otherwise. I am not going to say that people with disabilities who have access to assistive technologies should turn them down, but I am going to say that there is something of which I am wary in the case of assistive technologies.

There is the same question as with other technologies: “Is this really necessary? Does this help?” A blind friend said,

I was recently interviewed for a student’s project about assistive technology and shopping, and I told her that I wouldn’t use it in many circumstances. First of all, I think some of what is available has more ‘new toy’ appeal and is linked to advertising. Secondly, I think some things, though they may be convenient, are dehumanising. Why use a barcode scanner thingummy to tell what’s in a tin when I can ask someone and relate to someone?

Now to be clear, this friend does use assistive technologies and is at a high level of functioning: “For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required.”⁷⁵ I get the impression that the assistive technologies she has concerns about, bleed into augmented reality. Though she is absolutely willing to use assistive

⁷⁵ Luke 12:48, Classic Orthodox Bible.

technologies, particularly when they help her serve others, she is more than willing to ask as I am asking of many technologies, “What’s the use? Does this help? Really help?”

There is another, more disturbing question about assistive technologies. The question is not whether individual assistive technologies are helpful when used in individual ways, but whether a society that is always inventing higher standards for accessibility and assistive technology has its deepest priorities straight. And since I cannot answer that out of what my friend has said, let me explain and talk about the Saint and the Activist and then talk about how similar things have played out in my own life.

I write this without regrets about my own efforts and money spent in creating assistive technologies, and with the knowledge that in societies without assistive technologies many disabled people have no secular success. There are notable examples of disabled people functioning at a high level of secular success, such as the noted French Cabalist Isaac the Blind, but the much more common case was for blind people to be beggars. The blind people met by Christ in the Gospel were without exception beggars, and there are blind beggars in first world countries today.

What objection would I have to assistive technologies which, if they may not be able to create sight as of yet, none the less make the hurdles much smaller and less significant. Medicine cannot allow some patients to read a paper book, but assistive technologies make a way for them to access the book about as well as if they could see the book with their eyes. What is there to object in making disabled people more able to function in society as equal contributors?

The answer boils down to the distinction between the

Saint and the Activist as I have discussed them in “Farewell to Gandhi: The Saint and the Activist.”⁷⁶ The society that is patterned after the Saint is ordered towards such things as faith and contemplation. The society patterned after the Activist is the one that seeks to ensure the maximum secular success of its members. And if the Activist says, “Isn’t it wonderful how much progress we have made? Many disabled people are functioning at a high level!”, the Saint says, “There are more things in Heaven and earth than are dreamed of in your Activism. We have bigger fish to fry.” And they do.

Now to be clear, I am not saying that you should not use assistive technologies to help give back to society. Nor do I regret any of the time I’ve spent on assistive technologies. The first idea I wanted to patent was an assistive technology. But I do indeed have bigger fish to fry.

There is a way in which I am a little like the blind beggar in many societies that took the Saint for their pattern. It’s on a much lesser scale. I tried my hardest to earn a Ph.D. in theology. (She succeeded at getting her Ph.D.) At Cambridge University in England the faculty made me switch thesis topic completely, from a topic I had set at the beginning of the year, when two thirds of the year had passed and I had spent most of my time on my thesis. My grades were two points out of a hundred less than the cutoff for Ph.D. continuation, and Cambridge very clearly refused for me to continue beyond my master’s. Then I applied to other programs, and Fordham offered an assistantship, and I honestly found cancer easier than some

⁷⁶ C.J.S. Hayward, “Farewell to Gandhi: The Saint and the Activist,” CJS Hayward, June 12, 2021, <https://cjs Hayward.com/gandhi/>.

of the things that went wrong at Fordham.⁷⁷ I showed a writeup of my life at Fordham to a friend and he wrote, “I already knew all the things you had written up, and I was still shocked when I read it.” All of which to say is that the goal I had of earning a doctorate, and using that degree to teach at a seminary, seemed shattered. With all that happened, the door to earning a Ph.D. was decisively closed.

Now I know that it is possible to teach at a seminary on a master’s; it may be a handicap, but it certainly does not make such a goal impossible. But more broadly God’s hand was at work. For starters, I survived. I believe that a doctor would look at what happened and say, “There were a couple of places where what happened could have killed you. Be glad you’re alive.” Beyond that, there is something of God’s stern mercy: academic writing takes a lot more work than being easy to read, and only a few people can easily read it. I still have lessons to learn about work that is easy to read. But all the same, there is a severe mercy in what God has given. I have a successful website largely due to chance, or rather God’s providence; I was in the right place at the right time and for all my skill in web work happened to have successes I had no right to expect.

And God works through assistive technologies and medicine. When I was in middle school, I had an ankle that got sorer and sorer until my parents went to ask a doctor if hospitalization was justified. The doctor’s response, after taking a sample of the infection, said, “Don’t swing by home; go straight to the hospital and I’ll take care of the paperwork on this end for his admission.”

⁷⁷ See C.J.S. Hayward, “Profoundly Gifted and Orthodox at Fordham,” CJS Hayward, September 2, 2022, <https://cjshayward.com/orthodox-fordham/>.

I was hospitalized for a week or so, the bed rest day and night being the first time ever that I managed to get bored teaching myself from my father's calculus textbook. After I was discharged I still needed antibiotic injections every four hours. That involved medical treatment is just as activist as assistive technology, and without it I would not have written any the pieces on this website besides the Apple][BASIC four dimensional maze.⁷⁸

I am rather glad to be alive now.

So I am in a sense both a Ph.D. person who was lost on Activist terms, but met with something fitting on a Saint's terms, and a person who was found on Activist terms. God works both ways. Still, there are more things in Heaven and earth than are dreamed of in Activism.

Augmented Reality

When I was working at the National Center for Supercomputing Applications, one part of the introduction I received to the CAVE and Infinity Wall virtual reality was to be told that virtual reality "is a superset of reality," where you could put a screen in front of a wall and see, X-ray-style, wires and other things inside the wall.

Virtual reality does exist, and is popularized by SecondLife among many other projects, but that may not be the main niche. The initial thought was virtual reality, and when the dust has started to settle, the niche carved out was more a matter of augmented reality. Augmented reality includes, on a more humble level, GPS devices, and iPhone apps that let you scan a barcode or QR code and pull up web

78 Re-implemented using web technologies at C.J.S. Hayward, "A Four-Dimensional Maze," CJS Hayward, November 5, 2019, <https://cjshayward.com/maze/>.

information on the product you have scanned. But these are not the full extent of augmented reality; it's just an early installment. It is an opportunity to have more and more of our experience rewritten by computers and technology. Augmented technology is probably best taken at a lower dose and domineered.

Big Brother

Big Brother is a collection of technologies, but not a collection of technologies *you* choose because they will deliver a Big Brother who is watching you. Everything we do electronically is being monitored; for the moment the U.S. government is only using it for squeaky-clean apparent uses, and has been hiding its use. Even the Amish now are being monitored; they have decided not to hook up to a grid, such as electricity or landline phones, but cell phones can be used if they find them expedient to their series of conscious decisions about whether to adopt technologies. The Amish use the horse and buggy, but not the car, not because the horse is older, but because the horse and buggy provide some limited mobility without tearing apart the local community. The car is rejected not because it is newer, but because it frees people from the tightly bound community they have. And because they carry cell phones, the NSA tracks where they go. They might not do anything about it, but almost everything about us is in control of Big Brother. Though I know at least one person who has decided carrying a cell phone and having an iPass transponder is not worth being tracked, you have to be more Luddite than the Luddites, and know that you are already on file, if you are to escape observation.

Big Brother has been introduced step by step, bit by

bit. First there were rumors that the NSA was recording all Internet traffic. Then it came out in the open that the NSA was indeed recording all Internet traffic and other electronic communications, and perhaps (as portrayed on one TV program) we should feel sorry for the poor NSA which has to deal with all this data. That's not the end. Now Big Brother is officially mainly about national security, but this is not an outer limit either. Big Brother will probably appear a godsend in dealing with local crime before an open hand manipulating the common citizen appears. But Big Brother is here already, and Big Brother is growing.

Books and ebooks

A friend said in reference to *Harry Potter* that the Harry Potter series got people to read, and anything that gets people to read is good. My response (a tacit response, not a spoken one) is that reading is not in and of itself good. If computers are to be used in an ascetically discriminating fashion, so is the library; if you will recall my earlier writing about slightly inappropriate things at Cambridge and worse at Fordham,⁷⁹ every single person I had trouble with was someone who read a lot, and presumably read much more than someone caught up in *Harry Potter* mania. Some evidence that reading is not in and of itself good is to be found in that every person who gave me real trouble read more than is common among *Harry Potter* fans.

Orthodoxy is at heart an oral, or oral-like, culture, and while it uses books, it was extremely pejorative when one friend said of a Protestant priest in Orthodox clothes, “I

⁷⁹ C.J.S. Hayward, “Profoundly Gifted and Orthodox at Fordham,” CJS Hayward, September 2, 2022, <https://cjshayward.com/orthodox-fordham/>.

know what book he got that [pastoral practice] from.” The first degree of priesthood is called a ‘Reader’, and when one is tonsured a Reader, the bishop urges the Reader to read the Scriptures. The assumption is not that the laity should be reading, but need not read, the Scriptures, but that the laity can be doing the job of laity without being literate. Even where there is reading, the transmission of the most important things is oral in character, and the shaping of the laity (and presumably clergy) is through the transmission of oral tradition through oral means. In that sense, I as an author stand of something exceptional among Orthodox, and “exceptional” does not mean “exceptionally good.” Most Orthodox authors now come to Orthodoxy from the West, and their output may well be appropriate and a fitting offering from what they have. However, the natural, consistent result of formation in Orthodoxy does not usually make a non-author into an author.

As far as books versus ebooks, books (meaning paper codices) are a technology, albeit a technology that has been around for a long time and will not likely disappear. Ebooks in particular have a long tail effect, where in Amazon the vast majority of infrequently selling ebooks bring more sales than the small number of biggest performers. The barriers to put an ebook out are much more than to put a traditional book out. It has been said that ebooks are killing Mom and Pop bookstores, and perhaps it is worth taking opportunities to patronize local businesses. But there is another consideration in regards to books versus cheaper Kindle editions. The Kindle may be tiny in comparison to what it holds, and far more convenient than traditional books.

But it is much more capture proof.

“Capture proof”

In military history, the term “capture-proof” refers to a weapon that is delicate and exacting in its maintenance needs, so that if it is captured by the enemy, it will rather quickly become useless in enemy soldiers’ hands.

The principle can be transposed to technology, except that possessing this kind of “capture-proof” technology does not mean that it is an advantage that “we” can use against “them.” It comes much closer to say that FEMA or any of a host of explicitly hostile actors can shut down its usefulness at the flick of a switch. As time has passed, hot technologies become increasingly delicate and capture-proof: a laptop is clunkier than a cool tablet, but the list of things one can do with a tablet without network access is much shorter than the list of things can do with a laptop without network access. Or, to take the example of financial instruments, the movement has been towards more and more abstract derivatives, and these are fragile compared to an investment in an indexed mutual fund, which is in turn fragile compared to old-fashioned money.

“Cool,” “fragile,” and “capture-proof” are intricately woven into each other.

Einstein said, “I do not know what weapons World War III will be fought with, but World War IV will be fought with sticks and stones.” We might not have to wait until World War IV. Much of World War III may be fought with sticks and stones.

Cars

Perhaps the most striking Luddite horror of cars that

I have seen is in C.S. Lewis. He talked about how they were called “space-conquering devices,” while they should have been called “space-annihilating devices,” because he experienced future shock that cars could make long distances very close. (Diana Gabaldon said, “An Englishman thinks a hundred miles is a long way; and American thinks a hundred years is a long time.”)⁸⁰ The “compromise solution” he offered was that it was OK to use cars to go further as a special solution on weekends, but go with other modes of transport for the bread-and-butter of weekdays. (And this is more or less how Europeans lean.)

Cars are one of many technologies that, when introduced, caused future shock. It’s taken as normal by subsequent generations, but there is a real sense of “This new technology is depriving us of something basically human,” and that pattern repeats. And perhaps, in a sense, this shock is the pain we experience as we are being lessened by degrees and slowly turning from man to machine-dominated.

Compact fluorescent lights and incandescent bulbs

There is something striking about culture in relation to CFL’s. American society has a long history of technology migrations, and a thorough enough “out with the old, in with the new” that working 16mm film projectors, for instance, now fetch a price because we have so thoroughly gotten rid of them in favor of video. People who use them now aren’t using them as the normal way to see video; they may want to see old film canisters and maybe even digitize

⁸⁰ “A Quote from Drums of Autumn,” Goodreads (Goodreads), accessed September 16, 2022, <https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/371279-an-englishman-thinks-a-hundred-miles-is-a-long-way>.

them (so they can be seen without the use of a film projector).

Compare American use of 16mm film projectors with other countries such as Lebanon which have no real concept of being obsolete; they have a mix of old and new technologies, and they get rid of an old piece of technology, not because it is old, but because it is worn out.

The fact that we are transitioning to CFL's for most purposes is not striking; transitions happen all the time. One could trace "If you have a phone, it's a landline," to "You can have a two pound car phone, but it's expensive," to "You can have a cell phone that fits in your hand, but it's expensive," to "You can have a cell phone, which is much cheaper now," to "You can have a cell phone that does really painful Internet access," to "You can have a cell phone with graceful Internet access." There have been many successions like this, all because the adopters thought the new technology was an improvement on the old.

CFL's are striking and disturbing because, while there may be a few people who think that slightly reduced electricity usage (much smaller than a major household appliance) justifies the public handling fragile mercury containers, by and large the adoption is not of a snazzier successor to incandescent bulbs. Not only must they be handled like live grenades, but the light is inferior. The human race grew up on full-spectrum light, such as the sun provides. Edison may not have been aiming for a full-spectrum light, but his light bulb does provide light across the spectrum; that is an effect of an incandescent light that produces light that looks at all near a proper spectrum. This is a strange technology migration, and a rather ominous omen. As Jerry Mander wrote in *Four Arguments for the*

*Elimination of Television:*⁸¹

Artificial light from any source—whether incandescent or fluorescent—leaves out many segments of the spectral range found in natural light, and it delivers an entirely different mix of spectral ingredients. Incandescent light, for example, emphasizes the portion of the spectrum near the infrared while minimizing or leaving out others. Artificial light is quite literally *not* the same thing as natural light. To use the same term for both is to destroy understanding...

The plant literally takes light into its cells and converts it into nourishment. For a plant, light is a form of food. Ott has shown that changing the light source so that a plant ingests one set of spectral ingredients rather than another changes the nourishment and therefore the cellular and growth patterns of the plant. If you grow your own plants at home, you also know this to be true. You may not have a microscope with which to watch it, but if you move a plant nearer to the window (or farther away), it changes. Plant stores now sell special bulbs which help plants grow. When you move the plant or buy the bulb, what you are doing is changing the amount and spectral character of the light the plant receives. You are

⁸¹ Jerry Mander, *Four Arguments for the Elimination of Television* (New York: Perennial an imprint of HarperCollins Publishers, 2002), 176.

changing its diet.

When most bulbs available now are CFL's,⁸² there were better and worse choices. Some bulbs have been made with a filter outside the glass so they give off light that looks yellow rather than blue. I wouldn't look for that in and of itself. But some gave a full spectrum, even if it is a bluish full spectrum, and that is better. There were also lights sold that were slightly more shatter resistant, which is commendable, and there are some bulbs that are both full spectrum and shatter resistant. I'd buy the last kind if possible, or else a full spectrum CFL, at a hardware store if possible and online if not.

But I would momentarily like to turn attention from the extinction of regular use of incandescent bulbs to their introduction. Candles have been used since time immemorial, but they're not a dimmer version of a light bulb. Even if you have candlesticks and candles lit, the candle is something of a snooze button or a minor concession: societies that used candles still had people active more or less during daylight hours. (Daylight Saving Time was an attempt to enable people to use productive daylight hours which they were effectively losing.) People who used candles were still effectively tied to the cycle of day and night. Light bulbs caused a shock because they let you operate as early or as late as you wanted. Candles allowed you to wrap up a few loose ends when night had really fallen. Light bulbs made nighttime optional. And it caused people future shock.

82 This was written before good LED light bulbs were commonly available. I do not know if they emit a proper light spectrum; I know that old-fashioned, plain vanilla LEDs emitted light at exactly one spectrum.

I have mentioned a couple of different responses to CFL's: the first is to buy full spectrum and preferably shatter resistant (and even then handle the mercury containers like a live grenade), the second is turning to the rhythm of day and light and getting sunlight where you can. Note that inside most buildings, even with windows, sunlight is not nearly as strong as what the human person optimally needs. Let me mention one other complication from this.

There is a medical diagnosis called 'SAD' for 'Seasonal Affective Disorder', whose patients have lower mood during the winter months when we see very little light. The diagnosis seems to me a bit like the fad diagnosis of YTD, or Youthful Tendency Disorder, discussed in *The Onion*.⁸³ If you read about it and are half-asleep, it sounds like a description of a frightening syndrome. If you are awake, you will recognize a description of perfectly normal human tendencies. And the SAD diagnosis of some degree of depression when one is consistently deprived of bright light sounds rather normal to me. (Remember that while humans now live in all kinds of places, our human race is believed to have originated in Africa, with bright twelve hour days and dark twelve hour nights, spreading out to other parts of the world in scarcely more than an eyeblink of the time humans have been around.)⁸⁴ For that reason, that the diagnosis of SAD sounds like a perfectly normal

⁸³ The Onion, "More U.S. Children Being Diagnosed with Youthful Tendency Disorder," *The Onion* (The Onion, October 18, 2017), <https://www.theonion.com/more-u-s-children-being-diagnosed-with-youthful-tenden-1819565754>.

⁸⁴ "Recent African Origin of Modern Humans," Wikipedia (Wikimedia Foundation, September 1, 2022), https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Recent_African_origin_of_modern_humans.

response to deprivation of light not experienced in most of the time our ancestors have been around, I think that some of the best lighting you can get is with something from the same manufacturer of the Sunbox DL SAD Light Box Light Therapy Desk Lamp. That manufacturer is one I trust; I am a little wary of some of their cheaper competitors.

Meanwhile, I may note that circumstances have changed significantly, and society has moved from CFL's to LED lights, which can have a real spectrum matching some set temperature color. And this occurred as a natural shift; that is, the U.S. government did not interfere to ham-handedly phase out or shut down the sale of CFL's; CFL's are no longer really available as a mainstream option because they can't compete with LED lights in the market.⁸⁵

Children's toys

Charles Baudelaire, in his "*la Morale du Joujou*" ("the moral of the toy") talks about toys and the fact that the best toys leave something to the imagination. Children at play will imagine that a bar of soap is a car; girls playing with dolls will play the same imagined drama with rag dolls as they will with dolls worth hundreds of dollars. There has been a paradigm shift, where Lego sets have shifted from providing raw material to being a specific model, made of specilized pieces, that the child is not supposed to imagine, only to assemble. Lego sets are perhaps the preferred childhood toy of professional engineers everywhere; some of them may have patronized Lego's competitors, but the interesting thing about Legos that are not "you assemble it"

⁸⁵ See, for instance, "LED Light Bulb Brightness Scale & Color Charts: Bulb Guide," LED Light Bulb Brightness Scale & Color Charts | Bulb Guide, accessed September 16, 2022, <https://www.energyearth.com/general/categories/lighting/learn-more>.

models is that you have to supply something to what you're building. Lego the company might make pieces of different sizes and shapes and made them able to stick together without an adhesive; I wouldn't downplay that achievement on the part of the manufacturer, but the child playing with Legos supplies half of the end result. But this is not just in assembly; with older models, the Legos didn't look exactly like what they were supposed to be. Once, I saw a commercial for a miniature track where some kind of car or truck would transport a payload (a ball bearing, perhaps), until it came to a certain point and the payload fell through the car/track through a chute to a car below. When I asked my parents to buy it for me and they refused, I built it out of Legos. Of course it did not look anything like what I was emulating, but I had several tracks on several levels and a boxy square of a vehicle would carry a marble along the track until it dropped its payload onto a car in the level below. With a bit of imagination it was a consolation for my parents not getting the (probably expensive) toy I had asked for, and with a bit of imagination a short broom is a horse you can ride, a taut cord with a sheet hung over it is an outdoor tent, and a shaky box assembled from sofa cushions is a fort. Not, perhaps, that children should not be given toys, or that a square peg should be pounded into a round hole by giving everyone old-style Lego kits, but half of a children's toy normally resides in the imagination, and the present fashion in toys is to do all the imagining for the child.

There is a second issue in what is imagined for children. I have not looked at toys recently, but from what I understand dragons and monsters are offered to them. I have looked rather deeply into what is offered to children

for reading. The more innocuous part is bookstores clearing the classics section of the children's area for Disney Princess books. That's replacing nutritious food with junk food. The more serious matter is with *Dealing with Dragons* and other Unman's Tales.⁸⁶ That is giving a poisoned cup of a fairy-tale once one has realized that little girls are *sexist way too romantic*, and their thirst for fairy tales cannot simply be deleted.

The Cloud

Cloud computing is powerful, and it originated as a power tool in supercomputing, and has now come down to personal use in software like Evernote, a note-taking software system that synchronizes across all computers and devices which have it installed.

Cloud computing, besides being very powerful, is one more step in abstraction in the world of computing. It means that you use computers you have never even seen. Not that this is new; it is a rare use case for someone using the Web to own any of the servers for the sites he is visiting. But none the less, the older pattern is for people to have their own computers, with programs they have downloaded and/or purchased, and their own documents. The present trend to offload more and more of our work to the cloud is a step in the direction of vulnerability to the damned backswing.⁸⁷ The more stuff you have in the cloud, the more

86 C.J.S. Hayward, "Un-Man's Tales: C.S. Lewis's Perelandra, Fairy Tales, and Feminism," CJS Hayward, April 3, 2022, <https://cjshayward.com/unman/>.

87 The "damed backswing" is a recurring theme where society has something that is desirable, and then they migrate to something that gives them more of that something desirable, but then when the inner logic works out, it deletes both the new and old possession of that something desirable. See C.J.S. Hayward, "The Damned Backswing," CJS

of your computer investment can be taken away at the flick of a switch, or collapse because some intervening piece of the puzzle has failed. Not that computers are self-sufficient, but the move to the cloud is a way of being less self-sufficient.

My website is hosted on a cloud virtual private server, no longer with one or two “hot spares” that I have direct physical access to. There are some reasons the physical machine, which has been flaky for far longer than a computer should be allowed to be flaky (and which keeps not getting fixed), is one I keep as a hot spare.

Contraception and Splenda

There was one mostly Catholic mailing list where I was getting annoyed at the degree of attention given to one particular topic: I wrote,

Number of posts in this past month about
faith: 6

Number of posts in this past month about the
Bible: 8

Number of posts in this past month about the
Eucharist: 9

Number of posts in this past month extolling
the many wonders of Natural Family
Planning: 13

The Catholic Church’s teaching on Natural Family Planning is not, “Natural Family Planning, done correctly, is a 97% effective way to simulate contraception.” The Catholic Church’s teaching on

children is that they are the crown and glory of sexual love, and way down on page 509 there is a footnote saying that Natural Family Planning can be permissible under certain circumstances.”

And if I had known it, I would have used a quotation from Augustine I cited in “Contraception, Orthodoxy, and Spin Doctoring: A Look at an Influential but Disturbing Article:”⁸⁸

Is it not you who used to counsel us to observe as much as possible the time when a woman, after her purification, is most likely to conceive, and to abstain from cohabitation at that time, lest the soul should be entangled in flesh? This proves that you approve of having a wife, not for the procreation of children, but for the gratification of passion. In marriage, as the marriage law declares, the man and woman come together for the procreation of children. Therefore whoever makes the procreation of children a greater sin than copulation, forbids marriage, and makes the woman not a wife, but a mistress, who for some gifts presented to her is joined to the man to gratify his passion. Where there is a wife there must be marriage. But there is no marriage where motherhood is not in view; therefore neither is there a wife. In this way

88 C.J.S. Hayward, “Orthodoxy, Contraception, and Spin Doctoring: A Look at an Influential but Disturbing Article,” CJS Hayward, June 12, 2021, <https://cjs Hayward.com/contraception/>.

you forbid marriage. Nor can you defend yourselves successfully from this charge, long ago brought against you prophetically by the Holy Spirit (the Blessed Augustine is referring to I Tim 4:1-3).⁸⁹

Thus spoke the Catholic Church's favorite ancient theologian on contraception;⁹⁰ and to this it may be added that the term 'Natural Family Planning' is deceptive and perhaps treacherous in how it frames things. There is nothing particularly natural about artificially abstaining from sexual intercourse precisely when a woman is capable of the greatest desire, pleasure, and response.

The chief good of the marriage act is that it brings into being new people made in the image of God; "a baby is God's opinion that the world should go on."⁹¹ The chief good of eating is that it nourishes the body. Now there are also pleasures, but it is an act of confusion to see them as

89 "Orthodox Church Fathers: Patristic Christian Theology Classics Search Engine," Augustine: on the Morals of the Manicheans, accessed September 16, 2022,

<https://orthodoxchurchfathers.com/fathers/npnf104/npnf1046.htm>.

⁹⁰ Blessed Augustine is a saint and a Church Father to Orthodox, and "Blessed" here does not mean lesser sanctity any more than it does for holy fools like Blessed Xenia of St. Petersburg. However, to Romans, Augustine is not one Church Father among others; he is a polestar among Church Fathers in a way that evokes C.S. Lewis's "I believe in Christianity as I believe that the sun has risen: not only do I see it, but because by it I see everything else." ("A Quote by C.S. Lewis," Goodreads (Goodreads), accessed September 16, 2022, <https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/660-i-believe-in-christianity-as-i-believe-that-the-sun>.) Among Orthodox, if your only friend among the Fathers is Blessed Augustine, you should beware of standing on shaky ground.

⁹¹ "A Quote by Carl Sandburg," Goodreads (Goodreads), accessed September 16, 2022, <https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/18066-a-baby-is-god-s-opinion-that-the-world-should-go>.

pleasure delivery systems and an act of greater confusion to frustrate the greater purpose of sex or eating so that one may, as much as possible, use them just as pleasure delivery systems.

There are other strange effects of this approach. For starters, Splenda use correlates to increased weight gain.⁹² Perhaps this is not strange: if you teach someone, “You can eat as much candy and drink as many soft drinks as you like,” the lesson is “You can consume more without worrying about your waistline,” and you will consume more: not only more foods containing Splenda, but more foods not containing Splenda.

There is an interesting history, as far as “Natural” Family Planning goes, about how in ancient times Church Fathers were skeptical at best of the appropriateness of sex during the infertile period, then people came to allow sex during the infertile period despite the fact that it was shooting blanks. Then the West came to a point where priests hearing confessions were to insinuate “Natural” Family Planning to couples who were using more perverse methods to have sex without children.⁹³ Finally the adulation was realized where Natural Family Planning is honored to the gateway to the culture of life.

Contraception and Splenda are twins, and with Splenda I include not only other artificial sweeteners, but so-called “natural” sweeteners like Agave and Stevia which

⁹² See multiple results at Splenda+use+weight+gain at duckduckgo, accessed September 14, 2022, <https://duckduckgo.com/?q=splenda%2Buse%2Bweight%2Bgain&t=next&atb=v307-1&ia=web>.

⁹³ The whole process is catalogued in the magisterial John Thomas Noonan, *Contraception: A History of Its Treatment by the Catholic Theologians and Canonists / John T. Noonan Jr* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap, 1986).

happen not to be manufactured in a chemical factory, but whose entire use is to do Splenda's job of adding sweetness without calories. What exists in the case of contraception and Splenda alike is neutralizing a greater good in order to have as much of the pleasure associated with that good as possible. It says that the primary purpose of food and sex, important enough to justify neutralizing other effects as a detriment to focusing on the pleasure, is to be a pleasure delivery system.

About pleasure delivery systems, I would refer you to: *The Pleasure-Pain Syndrome*⁹⁴

The dialectic between pleasure and pain is a recurrent theme among the Fathers, and it is something of a philosophical error to pursue pleasure and hope that no pain will come. If you want to see real discontent with one's sexual experiences, look for those who are using Viagra and its kin to try to find the ultimate sexual thrill. What they will find is that sex becomes a disappointment: first, sex without drugged enhancement becomes underwhelming, and then Viagra or Cialis fail to deliver the evanescent ultimate sexual thrill.

The “Damned Backswing”

There is a phenomenon where something appears to offer great improvements, but it has a “damned backswing.” For one example in economics, in the 1950's the U.S. had an unprecedentedly high standard of living (meaning more appliances in houses—not really the best measure of living), and for decades it just seemed like, *It's Getting Better All the Time*. But now the U.S. economy is being destroyed, and

94 C.J.S. Hayward, “The Pleasure-Pain Syndrome,” CJS Hayward, November 5, 2019, <https://cjshayward.com/pleasure/>.

even with another regime, we would still have all the debts we incurred making things better all the time.

Another instance of the damned backswing is how medieval belief in the rationality of God gave rise to the heroic labors of science under the belief that a rational God would create a rational and ordered world, which gave way to modernism and positivism which might as well have put science on steroids, which in turn is giving way to a postmodernism and subjectivism that, even as some of it arose from the philosophy of science, is fundamentally toxic to objectivist science.

I invite you to read more about the” damned backswing.”⁹⁵

Email, texting, and “Instant Messages” (IMs)

“Email is for old people,” one youngster said, and email is largely the wave of the past. Like landlines and desktop computers, it will probably not disappear completely; it will probably remain the communication channel of corporate notifications and organizational official remarks. But social communication via email is the wave of the past: an article in A List Apart said that the website had originated as a mailing list, and added, “Kids, go ask your parents.”⁹⁶

When texting first caught on, it was neither on the iPhone nor the Droid. If you wanted to say, “hello”, you would probably have to key in, “443355555666”. But even then texting was a sticky technology, and so far, it is the only common technology I know of that is illegal to use

95 C.J.S. Hayward, “The Damned Backswing,” CJS Hayward, March 4, 2020, <https://cjshayward.com/backswing/>.

96 Jeffrey Zeldman et al., “Ten Years,” A List Apart, October 8, 2008, <https://alistapart.com/article/tenyears/>.

when driving. It draws attention in a dangerous way and is treated like alcohol in terms of something that can impair driving. It is a strong technological drug.

The marketing proposition of texting is an intravenous drip of noise. IMs are similar, if not always as mobile as cell phones, and email is a weaker form of the drug that youth are abandoning for a stronger version. Now, it should also be said that they are useful, and the proper ascetical use is to take advantage of them because they are useful (or not; I have a phone plan without texting and I text rarely enough that the default \$.20 per text makes sense and is probably cheaper than the basic plan).

Fasting and fasting from technologies

And the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes to look upon and beautiful to contemplate, and having taken of its fruit she ate, and she gave to her husband also with her, and they ate.⁹⁷

The healing of this comes in partly by eating, in the Holy Mysteries where we eat from the Tree of Life. But this is no imitation of Eve's sin, or Adam's. They lived in the garden of paradise, and there is no record of them fasting before taking from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. Before we take communion, we answer the question "Where are you?", the question in which God invited Adam and Eve to come clean, and expose their wound to the Healer; we prepare for confession and answer the question Adam and Eve dodged: "Where are you?" We do not live in

a garden of delights, but our own surroundings, and we turn away from sensual pleasures. Adam and Eve hid from God; we pray to him, and do not stop praying because of our own sordid unworthiness. And, having prepared, we eat from the Tree of Life.

“You shall not surely die,” and “Your eyes shall be opened, and you shall be as gods,” are some of the oldest marketing propositions, but they are remarkably alive in the realm of technology. Witness the triumph of hope over experience in the artificial intelligence project. Witness a society like the meticulously groomed technology of a Buddha who saw an old man, a sick man, and a dead man, and wondered whatever on earth they can mean. Mortality may be as total in our generation as any other, but we’ve done a good job of hiding it. Perhaps doctors might feel inadequate in the face of real suffering, but modern medicine can do a lot. In many areas of the third world, it might be painful, but it is not surprising to play with a child who was doing well two weeks ago and be told that he is dead. Death is not something one expects in homes; it is out of sight and half out of mind in hospitals and hospices. All of this is to say that those of us in the first world have a death-denying society, and if we have not ultimately falsified “You will surely die,” we’ve done a pretty good job of being in denial about it. And “You shall be as gods” is the marketing proposition of luxury cars, computers, smartphones, and ten thousand other propositions. My aunt, on discovering Facebook, said, “It feels like I am walking on water,” and Facebook offers at least a tacit marketing proposition of, “You shall be as gods.” Information technology in general, and particularly the more “sexy” forms of information technology, offer the

marketing proposition of, “Your eyes shall be opened, and you shall be as gods.”

There was one time, as an undergraduate, when I tried to see what it would be like to live as blind for a day, and so I was blindfolded and had a fascinating day which I wrote up for my psychology class. Now I would be careful in saying based on one day’s experience would let me understand the life experience of being blind, any more than a few days spent in Ontario entitle me to say that I understand Canadian culture. However, the experience was an interesting challenge, and it had something to do with fasting, even if it were more adventuresome than fasting normally is.

Fasting is first and foremost fasting from food, but there are other things one can fast from. Some Orthodox bid Facebook a temporary farewell for fasting seasons. On fasting days, we are bidden to cut back on sensory pleasures, which can mean cutting back on luxury technologies that give us pleasure.

I’m not sure how much fasting from technologies should form a part of one’s rule; it is commonplace to discuss with one’s priest or spiritual father how one will keep one’s fast, and with what *oikonomia* if such is needed. But one of the rules of fasting is that one attempts a greater and greater challenge. Far from being a spiritual backwater, Lent is the central season of the Christian year. And so I will present twenty-one things you might do to fast from technology:

1. **Sleep in a sleeping bag on the floor.**
(Monks mention sleeping on the floor as a discipline; the attenuated fast of sleeping on a

sleeping bag on the floor may help.)

2. **Leave your smartphone** at home for a day.
3. **Leave all consumer electronics** at home for a day.
4. **Only check for email, Facebook, etc. once every hour**, instead of all the time. Or, better, just once a day.
5. **Don't check your email**; just write letters with a pen or lead pencil.
6. **Camp out** in your back yard.
7. **Read a book outside**, using sunscreen if you need it.
8. **Organize some outdoor activity** with your friends or family.
9. **Don't use your computer or smartphone** while you are preparing for the Eucharist.
10. **Basic:** If you have games and entertainment apps or application, don't play them when you are fasting.
Harder: If you have games and entertainment applications, delete them.
11. **Basic:** Spend an hour outside with a book or an

ebook Kindle, doing nothing but read and observe the trees, the wind. and the grass growing. (You are welcome to use my ebooks.)

Harder: Spend an hour outside, but not with a book, just observing the trees, the wind, and the grass growing.

12. **Don't use your car for a week.** It's OK to get rides, and it may be a pleasure speaking with your friends, but experience being, in part, dependent, and you may be surprised how some of your driving suddenly seems superfluous.
13. **Shut off power for an hour.** If you keep your fridge and freezer doors shut, you shouldn't lose food, and sometimes power loss has meant adventure.
14. **Turn off your computer's network access** but still see what you can do with it for a day. (This work is written largely on a computer that doesn't have internet access for the majority of the time it is being used to write this.)
15. **Especially if you have a beautiful screensaver,** set your computer to just display a blank screen, and have a single color or otherwise dull wallpaper for a time, perhaps for a fasting season.
16. **Switch your computer's resolution to 800x600** or the tiniest it can go. That will take

away much of its status as a luxury.

17. **Make a list of interesting things** to do that do not involve a computer, tablet, or smartphone.
18. **Do some of the vibrant things on the list you just made** that do not involve a computer, tablet, or smartphone.
19. **Use computers or whatever other technologies**, not for what you can get from them, but what you can give through them.
20. **Bear a little more discomfort.** If you can deal with a slightly warmer room in the summer, turn down the air conditioning. If you can deal with a slightly cooler room in the winter, turn down the heat.
21. **Visit a monastery.** A monastery is not thought of in terms of being Luddite, but monasteries tend to be lower in level than technology, and a good monastery shows the vibrancy of life not centered about technology. And this suggestion is different. All the other suggestions say, “I would suggest.” The suggestion about the monastery says, “God has given.”

Food

There is some ambiguity, or better yet a double meaning, when the New Testament uses the term “breaking

bread.” On one level, breaking bread means a shared meal around the table. On another, it means celebrating the Eucharist.

You can say that there is one sacrament, or that there are seven, or that there are a million sacraments. A great many things in life have a sacramental dimension, even if the man on the street would not consider these to be religious matters. There is something sacramental about friendship. There is something sacramental about a meal around a table, even if the sacramental character of a meal is vanishing.

In Proverbs it is written, “Better is an entertainment of herbs with friendliness and kindness, than a feast of calves, with enmity.”⁹⁸ Today one may draw forth an implication: “Better is a dinner of really bad fast food with love than the most exquisite Weston A. Price Foundation or Paleo meal where there is hatred.”

However, there are ways that the sacramental character of meals is falling away. Many foods are not intended to be eaten around a table with family or friends: think of microwave dinners and the 100 calorie snack pack. Read *Nourishing Traditions*,⁹⁹ and *The Paleo Solution*,¹⁰⁰ which tell how far our industrial diet has diverged from meals that taste delicious precisely because they are nutritionally solid.

But besides the plastic-like foods of the industrial diet, there is another concern with munching or inhaling.

⁹⁸ Proverbs 15:17, Classic Orthodox Bible.

⁹⁹ Sally Fallon et al., *Nourishing Traditions: The Cookbook That Challenges Politically Correct Nutrition and the Diet Dictocrats* (Washington, DC: NewTrends Publishing, Inc., 2005).

¹⁰⁰ Robb Wolf and Loren Cordain, *The Paleo Solution: The Original Human Diet* (Las Vegas: Victory Belt Publishing, 2017).

The Holy Eucharist can legitimately be served, in an extreme case, with foods available to prisoners in Marxist concentration camps.¹⁰¹ For that matter it is normal for it to be made with white flour, and white flour is high on the list of foods that should be limited. (Although ceremonial Orthodox consumption of carbohydrates is a limited consumption that stays within Paleo guidelines.)¹⁰² It would be a mistake to insist on whole wheat flour because it is overall healthier. But with extreme exceptions such as grave illness, the Holy Mysteries are not to be consumed by oneself off in a corner. They are part of the unhurried unfolding of the Divine Liturgy, which ideally unfolds rather naturally into the unhurried unfolding of a common meal.

Both eating snacks continually to always have the pleasure of the palate, and the solo meal that is inhaled so it can be crammed into an over-busy schedule, fall short of the (broadly) sacramental quality of a common meal around a table.

In Alaska there are many people but not so many priests, and therefore many parishes rarely celebrate the Divine Liturgy. And a bishop, giving advice, gave two pastoral directions to the faithful: first that they should pray together, and second that they should eat together.

Let us try harder to eat with others.

¹⁰¹ See, for instance, every time the Eucharist is mentioned in a concentration camp setting in Alexander and Vera Bouteneff, *Father Arseny, 1893-1973: Priest, Prisoner, Spiritual Father: Being the Narratives Compiled by the Servant of God Alexander Concerning His Spiritual Father* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2002).

¹⁰² Robb Wolf and Loren Cordain, *The Paleo Solution: The Original Human Diet* (Las Vegas: Victory Belt Publishing, 2017), 195. "Two to six ounces of protein and twenty to seventy-five grams of carbohydrates [for a post-workout meal] bracket the needs of most athletes."

GPS

GPS is in general an example of something that has a double effect. Traditionally, advertising helps people to covet what a company has to offer, and the behavior stimulated by the advertising is to advance the company's interest, even though the company never says "We are making this so that we will acquire more money or market share." As in *How to Win Friends and Influence People*,¹⁰³ the prime actor is attempting to pursue his or her own interests, while it is presented entirely as being to the advantage of the other party on the other party's terms.

Apple didn't just change the game by making the first smartphone done right, in which regard the iPhone is commonly considered more significant than the Macintosh. The company that invented and still sells the Macintosh has established something more important than owning a Macintosh: owning an iPhone or iPad, which unlike the Macintosh generate a steady subscription income stream. The strict monetary price for my laptop was 100% up front: now that I've made the one-time purchase, I do not have any further financial obligations that will filter to the manufacturer. A previous iPhone, on the other hand, had a subscription and contract; part of my hefty baseline phone bill went to Apple. And if I were to purchase an iPad, I would have two subscriptions. (The main reason I have not seriously moved towards buying an iPad is not what I would pay up front; it is adding another subscription.)

The GPS also has a double effect. It is what science fiction writers called a "tracking device." Now it is a terrifically useful traffic advice; part of the marketing

¹⁰³ Dale Carnegie, *How to Win Friends and Influence People* (S.I.: Vermilion, 2022).

proposition offered for Sila on the iPhone 4 S is that it makes terrifically resourceful use of a GPS. (“I feel like a latte.”—and it is the GPS that Sila uses to find nearby locations where one might find a latte.) On a more pedestrian level GPS for driving (or biking, or walking) has become so entrenched that people don’t know what they’d do without it to reach unfamiliar locations. I have never heard someone question the utility of a GPS for this or other purposes, and I’ve heard of interesting-sounding hobbies like geocaching, where you navigate to specified coordinates and then search out and find some hidden attraction in the area indicated by the GPS.

But for all of these things, GPS, as well as cell phones in general, provide one more means for Big Brother (and possibly more than one Big Brother) to know exactly where you go, when you go there, what the patterns are, and other things where Big Brother *will* keep closer tabs on your whereabouts and activities than either your spouse or parent. IBM published a book on “Why IBM for Big Data?” and made it very clear that Big Brother analysis of data isn’t just for No Such Agency. It’s also for the corporate world. One author told the seemingly attractive story of having made repeated negative posts on his FaceBook wall, slamming an airline after repeated problems, and the airline reached out to him and gave him a service upgrade. This was presented in the most positive light, but it was very clear that business were being invited to use IBM’s expertise to do Big Data Big Brother analysis on social networks.

Guns and modern weapons (for fantasy swords, see Teleporters)

Let me give a perhaps controversial preamble before

directly talking about weapons.

I have spoken both with NRA types and anti-gun advocates, and there is a telling difference. The anti-gun advocates point to hard-hitting, emotional news stories where a walking arsenal opens fire in a school and kills many people. The NRA types may briefly talk about selective truth-telling and mention an incident where someone walked into a church armed to kill a bear, and an off-duty security guard who was carrying a gun legally and with the explicit permission of church leadership, “stopped the crime.” But that is something of a tit-for-tat sideline to the main NRA argument, which is whenever I have met it in person by gun advocates, to appeal to statistical studies that show that legal gun ownership does not increase crime.

I have a strong math background and I am usually wary of statistics. However, I find it very striking that anti-gun advocates have never in my experience appealed to statistics to show that legal gun ownership increases crime, but only give hard-hitting emotional images, while the bread-and-butter of NRA argument is an appeal to research and statistics. I’ve never personally investigated those statistics, but there is something suspicious and fishy when only one side of a debate seriously appeals to research and statistics.

With that preamble mentioned, learning to really use a gun is a form of discipline and stillness, and I tried to capture it in the telescope scene in “Within the Steel Orb.”¹⁰⁴ Hunting can be a way to be close to your food, and I approve of hunting for meat but not hunting for taxidermy. However, sacramental shopping for weapons is as bad as

¹⁰⁴ C.J.S. Hayward, “Within the Steel Orb,” CJS Hayward, March 4, 2020, <https://cjs Hayward.com/steel/>.

any other sacramental shopping. I would tentatively say that if you want skill with a weapon, and will train to the point that it becomes something of a spiritual discipline, then buying a weapon makes sense. If you want to buy a gun because all the cool guys in action-adventure movies have one, or you are not thinking of the work it takes to handle a gun safely and use it accurately, I would question the appropriateness of buying a gun. Owning a gun because that is part of your culture is one thing; buying a gun because they are glamorized in movies is another thing entirely.

Heating and air conditioning

A college roommate commented that middle class Americans had basically as much creature comforts as were available. Not that Americans can buy everything one would want; but there is a certain point beyond which money cannot purchase necessities, but only luxuries. Then a certain point after that where money cannot purchase luxuries, but only status symbols. Then there is a point beyond that where money cannot purchase any more meaningful status symbols, but only power. Middle class Americans may well not be able to purchase every status symbol they want, but really there is not much more creature comfort that would come with ten times one's salary.

Heating and air conditioning are one such area, and monastics wear pretty much the same clothing in summer and winter. One Athonite monk talked about a story about how several Russian sailors made a fire and stood close, and still did not feel warm, while islanders who were barely clad stood some distance off and were wincing because of the

heat. We lose some degree of spiritual strength if we insist on having cool buildings in the summer and warm buildings in the winter. Even just cutting back a bit, so that buildings are warm but not hot in the summer and cool but not cold in the winter would constitute a spiritual victory. Usually this sort of thing is argued for environmental reasons; I am not making the argument that the lowered utility usage is good for the environment but that the lowered utility usage is constructive and, in the old phrase, “builds character.” Indoor tracks exist, but in the summer I see bicyclists and runners exercising hard in the summer. These people are not super-heroes, and exercising in the heat really does not seem to be much of a deterrent to getting one’s artificially added exercise. The human body and spirit together are capable of a great deal more sturdiness, when instead of always seeking comfort, we learn that we can function perfectly well after adjusting to discomfort. This is not just with heating and air conditioning; it is true with a lot of things.

Hospitality

There is an ancient code of hospitality that recently has been influenced by consumer culture. What commercial marketing does, or at least did, to make a gesture of friendship and welcome, was from offering a selection of choices carefully fitted to the demographics being targeted. Starbucks not only established that you could market an experience that would command a much higher price than a bottomless cup of coffee at a regular diner; they sold not one coffee but many coffees. You had a broad selection of consumer choices. Starbucks was doubtlessly more successful than some frozen yogurt places I visited in grad

school, which offered something like fifty or more flavors and varieties of yogurts and had staff who were mystified when customers said, “But I just want some frozen yogurt!” As a nuance, Starbucks offers guidance and suggestions for the undecided—and a large number of choices for the decided.

And in light of the hospitality industry, hosts offer guests choices, and sometimes mystify them by the offering: a guest, according to the older (unwritten) code, did not have the responsibility of choosing what would be offered. Now perhaps I need to clarify that if you have a severe peanut allergy and your host offers you a peanut butter and jelly sandwich, you are not duty bound to accept it. But even then, social graces come to play. I remembered one time, at a feast although not strictly a host/guest relationship, when I offered a friend a glass of port and he kindly reminded me that he was a recovering alcoholic. I apologized profusely, and he stopped me and said, “I appreciate the offer, I just can’t drink it.” So then I offered him something he could consume, and he took it and thanked me for it. Social graces apply.

But this is something of a footnote. There is a story of a staretz or monastic spiritual father who was going with one of a monk’s disciples, and they visited a monastery that was feasting with bread, and the elder and disciple both shared in that informal communion, and then the two of them resumed their journey. The disciple asked the master if he could drink water, and to his astonishment was told no. The master, in answering his question, said, “That was love’s bread. But let us keep the fast.”¹⁰⁵ The Fathers are very clear: as a prior parish priest said from the pulpit,

¹⁰⁵ Helen Waddell, *The Desert Fathers* (New York: Vintage, 1998), 142.

“Hospitality trumps fasting.” And the assumption there is that fasting is important enough. This piece originated with the title, “Fasting from technologies.” But hospitality is even more important.

The ancient rule of hospitality, although this is never thought of in these terms with today’s understanding of authority, is that the host has a profound authority over the guest which the guest will obey, even to the point of trumping fasting. However, this is not what we may think of as despotism; the entire purpose and focus of the host’s role in hospitality is to extend the warmest welcome to the guest. I remember one time when a friend visited from Nigeria, and although I set some choices before them, when I said, “We can do A, B, and C; I would recommend B,” in keeping with hospitality they seemed to always treat my pick as tacit authority and went along with me. It was a wonderful visit; my friend made a comment about being treated like royalty, but my thought was not about how well I was treating them. My thought was that this would probably be the last time I saw my friend and her immediate family face to face, and that I’d better make it count.

I might comment that this is tied to our inability today to understand a husband’s authority over his wife and the wife’s submission. The role is somewhat like that of host and guest. A liberal source speaking on the Ephesians haustafel as it dealt with husbands and wives said that it did not portray marriage in terms of the husband’s authority, while a conservative source understood authority at a deeper level: it said that nowhere here (or anywhere else in the Bible) are husbands urged, “Exercise your authority!”, but the text that says, “Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord,” also says, “Husbands,

love your wives, even as Christ also loved the Church, and gave himself for it.” If the wife’s role is to submit herself to her husband as to the Lord, the husband’s role is to give up his life as Christ was crucified for the Church.

And all of this seems dead to us, as we have grown dead to it. The role of hospitality, including authority, is infinitely less important than marriage, yet we see a husband’s authority as external and domineering, when it is less external than the host’s authority. I am drawn to memories of visiting one very traditional couple where both of them exuded freedom and comfort and dealing with them felt like a foot sliding into a well-fitting shoe. If we see a husband having authority over a wife as a foreign imposition, and nothing like the implicit authority we do not even recognize between host and guest (where the host’s authority consists in making every decision to show as much kindness as possible to the guest), this is not a defect in marriage, but in our deafened ears.

An intravenous drip of noise

“Silence is the language of the age to come,” as others have said.¹⁰⁶ Hesychasm is a discipline of stillness, of silence, of “Be still and know that I am God.”¹⁰⁷ Whether spiritual silence is greater than other virtues, I do not wish to treat here; suffice it to say that all virtues are great health, and all vices are serious spiritual diseases, and all are worth attention.

There are a number of technologies whose marketing

¹⁰⁶ Fr. Stephen Freeman, “The Sounds of Silence,” *Glory to God for All Things*, May 21, 2009, <https://blogs.ancientfaith.com/glory2godforallthings/2009/05/21/the-sounds-of-silence/>.

¹⁰⁷ Psalm 45:10, *Classic Orthodox Bible*.

proposition is as a noise delivery system. The humble radio offers itself as a source of noise. True, there are other uses, such as listening to a news radio station for weather and traffic, but just having a radio on in the background is noise. Other sources of noise include television, iPods, smartphones, the web, and top sites like FaceBook, Google Plus, and the like. Right use of these tends to be going in and out for a task, even if the task lasts five hours, versus having noise as a drone in the background.

In terms of social appropriateness, there is such a thing as politely handling something that is basically rude. For one example, I was visiting a friend's house and wanted to fix his printer, and apologetically said I was going to call my brother and called him to ask his opinion as a computer troubleshooter. I handled the call as something that was basically rude even though the express purpose was to help with something he had asked about and it was a short call. And it was handled politely because I handled it as something that is basically rude. And other people I know with good manners do sometimes make or receive a cell phone call when you otherwise have their attention, but they do so apologetically, which suggests that just ignoring the other person and making a phone call is rude. In other words, they politely handle the interruption by treating it as something that is basically rude, even if (as in the case I mentioned) the entire intention of the call was to help me help the friend I was visiting.

Something like this applies to our use of technology. There are things that are entirely appropriate if we handle them as something that is basically "rude," or, perhaps, "noisy." The equivalent of making a long phone call when you are with someone, without offering any apology or

otherwise treating it as basically rude, is laying the reins on the horse's neck and allowing technologies to function as a noise delivery system. What we need is to unplug our intravenous drip of noise.

Silence can be uncomfortable if you are used to the ersatz companionship of noise. If you have been in a building and step outside into the sunlight at noon, you may be dazzled. Most spiritual disciplines stretch us into something that is uncomfortable at first: the point is to be stretched more each time. The *Philokalia* talks about how people hold on to sin because they think it adorns them: to this may be added that after you repent and fear a shining part of you may be lost forever, you realize, "I was holding on to a piece of Hell." Silence is like this; we want a noise delivery system as a drone, and once we begin to get used to its absence, there is a deeper joy. It may take time; it takes something like a year for a recovering alcoholic's brain chemistry to reset. But once we have got rid of the drug, once we have repented and sought to bear fruit worthy of repentance, we may find ourselves (to adapt the title of a book) blindsided by joy.

Killing time

"You cannot kill time," the saying goes, "without injuring eternity."

At least one breakdown of mobile users has said that they fall into three groups: "Urgent now," people who have some degree of emergency and need directions, advice, contingency plans, and the like, "Repeat now," people who are monitoring information like whether or how their stocks are doing, and "Bored now," people who are caught and have some time to kill, and look for a diversion.

“Bored now” use of cell phones is simply not constructive spiritually; it offers a virtual escape for the here and now God has given us, and it is the exact opposite of the saying, “Your cell [as a monk] will teach you everything you need to know.”

The lead pencil

The lead pencil is a symbol of an alternative to an overly technologized world; one organization of people who have made a conscious decision to avoid the encroachment of technology chose the lead pencil as their emblem and formed the Lead Pencil Club.

But the lead pencil is a work of technology, and one that exists during the less than 1% of the time humans have lived for which we have recorded demographic data.¹⁰⁸ And even such a seemingly humble technology comes about in an impressive fashion; one economist wrote a compelling case that only God knows how pencils are made.

Sitting down and writing letters is a valuable discipline, but the norm that has been lived by 99% of the human race is oral culture; anthropologists have increasingly realized that the opposite of “written” culture is not “illiterate” culture but “oral” culture.¹⁰⁹ And the weapon that slides through the chink in oral culture’s armor is the writing implement, such as the lead pencil. It is not the computer, but the lead pencil and its kin, that serve as a

¹⁰⁸ Kaneda, “How Many People Have Ever Lived on Earth?,” How Many People Have Ever Lived on Earth? | Corrections Environmental Scan, May 18, 2021, <https://info.nicic.gov/ces/global/population-demographics/how-many-people-have-ever-lived-earth>.

¹⁰⁹ “Why Teachers Need to Understand the Differences between Oral and Literate Cultures.,” ETEC540 Text Technologies RSS, accessed September 20, 2022, <https://blogs.ubc.ca/etec540sept09/2009/10/05/cultural-relevance/>.

disease vector to destroy age-old orality of culture.

This is not to say that you cannot try to use computer keyboards less and pens and pencils more. But understand that you're not turning the clock all the way back by writing handwritten letters, however commendable the love in handwritten letters may be. The lead pencil is a technology and to those societies that embrace it, it is the death knell to an old way.

The long tail

Let me briefly outline the long tail. It is a phenomenon seen with Amazon and YouTube, where the majority of sales do not come from a statistical curve's top sellers, but a long tail of a slowly decreasing curve where a large number of items sold in the tail of the curve adds up to more than a few top sellers.

A retail bookstore needs to sell one copy of a book in a year's time, or else that book is losing them money. Shelf space is an expensive commodity. This leads to a form of implicit censorship, not because bookstores want to stamp out certain books, but because if it's not a quick seller or a safe bet, it's a liability.

By contrast, Amazon has large volumes of shelf space; their warehouses might comfortably store a city. It costs them some money to acquire books, but the price of keeping books available is insignificant compared to a brick-and-mortar bookstore. What that means, and not just on Amazon, is that the economic censorship is lifted. People used to wonder who would be able to fill hundreds or more cable channels; now Youtube would be hard pressed to reduce itself down to a thousand channels. And so a much larger portion of Amazon's profits comes from having an

enormous inventory of items that occasionally make a sale.

There is specialization implicit in the long tail; if you want to know how to make something, chances are pretty good that some blog explains how. And the proper ascetical use of technology, or Luddite if you prefer, uses things differently than the mainstream. Nobody in a phone store is going to tell you that an intravenous drip of noise in terms of text messages that go on even when you are trying to sleep does not make you happier than if you use texting when there is a special need. Some of the best resources you will find for ascetical use of technology are to be found in the long tail.

However, there is something else that comes with it. The temptation is to be off in our own customized worlds, with everything around our interests. And that is a form of spiritual poverty. Part of an age-old asceticism has been learning how to deal with the people who are around you, localist style, instead of pursuing your own nooks and crannies. The monoculture of retail stores in America was first a problem, not because it had no long tail effects, but because it supplanted at least an implicit localism. Local cultures gave way to plastic commercial culture.

And we can use the long tail to our profit, if we don't abandon our eternal vigilance. Shopping on the Internet for things that won't be local stores is one thing; shopping on the Internet so you don't have to get out of your pyjamas is another.

The long tail can be your best friend, or an insidious enemy.

The long tail can be a gold mine, but it is subject to the "damned backswing."

Marketing proposition

There was one CIA official who said, being interviewed by a journalist, that he would never knowingly hire someone who was attracted by the romance of cloak and dagger work. Now this was quite obviously someone who did want to hire people who would be a good fit, but someone who wants to join a cloak and dagger agency as a gateway to have life feel like a James Bond movie is off on the wrong foot.

I doubt if any major intelligence agency has promoted James Bond movies because they think it's a good way to draw the right recruits, but James Bond movies function as highly effective advertisements. They may not lead people to be able to stick out the daily grind and level of bureaucracy in a three-letter government agency, but they give a strong sense that spying is cool, and cool in a way that probably has only the most accidental resemblance to life in one of those bureaucratic organizations.

Cop shows likewise show police officers pulling their guns out much more than in real life; it is a frequent occurrence on the cop shows I've seen, while only 27% of sworn officers have used a gun on the job (outside of training or the range).¹¹⁰

Advertisement is produced as a service to the companies whose goods and services are being advertised, but the real message they sell is if anything further from the truth than the "accidental advertisement" of James Bond movies advertising a romantic version of bureaucratic

¹¹⁰ Rich Morin and Andrew Mercer, "A Closer Look at Police Officers Who Have Fired Their Weapon on Duty," Pew Research Center (Pew Research Center, August 18, 2020), <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2017/02/08/a-closer-look-at-police-officers-who-have-fired-their-weapon-on-duty/>.

intelligence agencies and cop shows making a dramatization that effectively ignores the day-to-day work of police officers because it just doesn't make good drama. (What would happen to the ratings of a cop show if they accurately portrayed the proportion of time that police officers spend filling out paperwork?)

Advertising sells claims that are further out. Two examples discussed in a class I attended in college showed a family that moved, and what was juxtaposed as cementing this bonding time was a vacuum cleaner. In another commercial, racial harmony was achieved by eating a hamburger. The commercials that stuck with me from childhood were in one case kids jumping around with rotating camera angles because they were wearing a particular brand of shoes: When I asked my parents for those shoes, they explained to me that the commercial was made to make me want them, and I took a marker and colored the patterns on the bottom of the shoes on the add on to my shoes. Another one showed a game of Laser Tag that was end to end acrobatics. Now I have never played Laser Tag, and I get the impression people like it, but I doubt that its gear confers the ability to do theatrically delivered acrobatics.

Marketing is usually more subtle and seductive than I have portrayed it here. The vacuum cleaner did not offer any words connecting the appliance with family connectedness; it's just that this family was going through a major experience and the vacuum cleaner appeared with perfect timing just at the center of that memory. The marketing message that is portrayed is seductive and false, and it is never the right basis on which to judge the product. The product may be the right thing to buy, and it may well

be worth buying, but only after one has rejected the mystique so masterfully built up in the marketing proposition. If it is right for me to study ninjutsu (it isn't), it will only be right after I have rejected the ninja mystique, something which the nearest dojo does in fact do: they refer to the martial art they teach as "toshindo", nor "ninjutsu", even though they refer to essentially the same thing in Japanese.

I have said earlier, or rather repeated, the words, "Hang the fashions. Buy only what you need."¹¹¹ They bear repeating, but is there anything else to add? I would add three things:

1. Reject sacramental shopping.
2. Reject the mystique advertising has sold you this product on.
3. Wait until your heart becomes clear about what is the best choice, and then make the best choice.

The best choice, in the third world, may be to buy a Mercedes-Benz instead of a Ford because you cannot afford to replace a Ford in six years.

But take care of the spiritual housecleaning first.

Martial arts

There have been two times in my life that I have studied martial arts, and both of them have been times of

¹¹¹ Richard J. Foster, *In Celebration of Discipline: The Path to Spiritual Growth: Special Anniversary Edition Featuring Two New Essays*, n.d., 90.

exceptional spiritual dryness. I have not felt any particular dryness when learning how to use a bow and arrow, or a .22, but there is something different about Asian martial arts. Practicing them, like Orthodox Christianity, is walking along a way. It would seem to create confusion to try to pursue one of these ways along with the Orthodox way.

I am careful of declaring this in the absolute; the literature is ambivalent but there are soldiers who bear the cross of St. George, and many of them have training in Asian martial arts.

I am tempted to train in ninjutsu: partly for technique, partly because the whole of the training includes stealth, and partly for practical self-defense. But I am treating that desire as a temptation, on the understanding that God can impress things on my conscience if he wants me to enter training.

MMO's (Massive Multiplayer Online Role Playing Games, like World of Warcraft)

“Do You Want to Date My Avatar?” was designed and created as a viral video, and something about it really stuck.

There are common threads between many of the things there, and an MMO is a cross between the MUDs I played in high school, and SecondLife. MUDs, short for “multi-user dungeons” or “multi-user dimensions,” are a text-based precursor to graphical Massive Multiplayer Online games. The MUDs were handled from pure text, leaving imagery in the player’s imagination; MMO’s provide their own imagery. Another form of escape.

Money and financial instruments

The Fathers commenting on St. Job also illustrate

another principle of such wealth as existed then. St. Job is reported as having thousands of herd animals and thousands of beasts of burden, the wealthiest of the men of the East. But there are somewhat pointed remarks that wealthy Job is not reported to possess gold or silver. His wealth was productive wealth, living wealth, not a vault of dead metal coins. In modern terms he did not live off an endowment of stocks and bonds, but owned and ran a productive business.

Endowments are a means of being independently wealthy, and at least one Sunday school teacher says this ultimately means “independent from God.” Now the wealthiest are really as dependent on God as the poorest. Let us remember the parable of the rich fool, in which a man congratulates himself for amassing everything he would need. That night the angels demanded his soul from him. The ending is much sadder than St. Job’s story.

Those of us in the world usually possess some amount of money, but there is something that makes me uncomfortable about the stock market overall, even moreso for the more abstract financial instruments. What one attempts to do is gain the most money from one’s existing money as much as possible, given the amount of risk you want, and possibly including such outliers as ethical index funds which only index stocks deemed to meet an ethical standard. The question I have is, “What are we producing for what we get out of the stock market?” Working in a job delivers tangible value, or at least can. Investing in the stock market may be connected with helping businesses to function, but more and more abstract forms of wealth have the foul smell that heralds the coming of the “damned backswing.” And I would point that American society today

has moved to more abstract forms of wealth, and is facing a depression. We live in a time when it is easy for a person to get an app or a book to market without involving a traditional publisher, but it is a time where, really, technology (and abstract wealth) are part of our poverty.¹¹²

I would suggest as a right use of wealth: acquire tools that help you work, and be generous even or especially if money is tight, and explicitly depend on God.

Movies

When movies had arrived on the scene and were starting to have a societal effect, at least one Luddite portrayed a character moving from one movie to another in escapism. The premise may seem quaint now, but a little bit of that keeps on happening with new technologies.

One fellow parishioner talked about how in Japan, anime shows aired with a certain animation technique, and all of the sudden emergency rooms were asking why they were being inundated with people having epileptic seizures. When they saw the connection, Japan stopped cold in its use of that animation technique.¹¹³ My friend said that that underscored to him the power of television and movies.

I don't quite agree with him, any more than I would agree with findings that extremely high levels of artificial light—fluorescent, LED, or incandescent—cause problems, and we should therefore be very wary of lighting. For most sedentary people, even with artificial light (fluorescent or incandescent), the level of exposure to light is materially

¹¹² C.J.S. Hayward, "Technology Is Part of Our Poverty," CJS Hayward, September 7, 2022, <https://cjshayward.com/technology-is-part-of-our-poverty/>.

¹¹³ See CNN (Cable News Network), accessed September 20, 2022, <http://www.cnn.com/WORLD/9712/17/video.seizures.update/>.

lower than natural exposure to the sun, and people who spend their time indoors tend to see less light, significantly less light, than people living outdoors. I didn't accept his conclusion, but he followed with another insight that I can less easily contest.

He asked if I saw movies infrequently (we had not discussed the topic, but he knew me well enough to guess where I might stand), and I told him that I usually don't watch movies. He asked me if I had ever observed that an hour after seeing a movie, I felt depressed. I had not made any connection of that sort, even if now it seems predictable from the pleasure-pain syndrome. Now I very rarely see movies, precisely because the special effects and other such tweaks are stronger than I am accustomed to seeing; they go like a stiff drink to the head of the teetotaler. The little pleasures of life are lost on someone used to a rising standard of special effects, and the little pleasures of life are more wholesome than special effects.

Multitasking

As I discussed in “Religion And Science’ Is Not Just Intelligent Design Vs. Evolution,”¹¹⁴ one of the forms of name-dropping in academic theology is to misuse “a term from science”; the claim to represent “a term from science” is endemic in academic theology at Fordham, but I can count on the fingers of one hand the number of times I’ve read “a term from science” that was used correctly.

One book read during my studies, in a paper I no longer have, said it was going to introduce “a term from

114 C.J.S. Hayward, “Religion and Science’ Is Not Just Intelligent Design vs. Evolution,” CJS Hayward, April 23, 2021, <https://cjsahayward.com/religion-science/>.

computer science,” *toggling*, which meant switching rapidly between several applications. The moral of this story was that we should switch rapidly between multiple activities in our daily lives.

What I would have said earlier is, “While that moral might be true, what it is not is a lesson from computer science.” What I would say now is, “Never mind if that is a lesson from computer science. The moral is fundamentally flawed.” Switching between activities quickly takes a heavy and unnecessary cognitive toll, and multitasking is an unproductive and inefficient way to work.¹¹⁵

In the Sermon on the Mount, Matthew 6:22, Christ says, “If thine eye be,” and then a word that doesn’t come across in translation very well. It is rendered “healthy” (NIV), “clear” (NASB), “sound” (RSV), and “good” (NKJV, NLT), Only the King James Version properly renders the primary sense of *haplous* as “single.” This may be a less user-friendly translation but it captures something the other translations miss. The context of the discussion of the eye as the lamp of the body is about choosing whether to have a single focus in serving God, or try to multitask between serving God and money. *Haplous* does have “healthy”, “clear”, “sound”, and “good” as secondary meanings, but the primary meaning is the less accessible one that I have only found in the Greek and in the King James. If the eye is the lamp of the body, and it is important that the eye be single, then by extension the whole person is to be single, and as one aspect of this single eye, give a whole and single attention to one thing at a time. Now this

¹¹⁵ Kendra Cherry, “Cognitive and Productive Costs of Multitasking,” Verywell Mind (Verywell Mind, July 30, 2021), <https://www.verywellmind.com/multitasking-2795003>.

is not necessarily a central, foreground focus in the Sermon on the Mount, but as its logic unfurls, even as spiritual silence unfurls, a single eye gives its whole and undivided attention to one thing at a time. (And study after study has shown that increased productivity through multitasking is an illusion; divided attention is divided attention and hurts all manner of actions.)

Nutriceuticals

The term “nutriceuticals” is itself an ambiguous and ambivalent term.

On the one hand, ‘nutriceuticals’ can refer to the diet advanced by the *Nourishing Traditions*¹¹⁶ and Paleo schools, and while nutrition should not be considered on its own without reference to the big picture of exercise, work, light, almsgiving, fasting, prayer, and the Holy Mysteries, there is something to the recipes and type of diet advocated in *Nourishing Traditions* or better, Paleo. On eating either instead of fast food, our bodies are healthier and our minds are clearer.

However, it seems that everybody selling certain things wants to be selling “nutriceuticals”, and there are people selling “synthetic testosterone” as a “nutriceutical.” Friends, I really hope that the offer of “synthetic testosterone” is false advertising, because if it is false advertising they are probably delivering a better product than if it’s truth in advertising. Testosterone is a steroid, the chief of the anabolic steroids used to get muscles so big they gross girls out. Now testosterone does have legitimate

¹¹⁶ Sally Fallon et al., *Nourishing Traditions: The Cookbook That Challenges Politically Correct Nutrition and the Diet Dictocrats* (Washington, DC: NewTrends Publishing, Inc., 2005).

medical uses, but using steroids to build disgustingly huge muscles can use up to a hundred times what legitimate medical use prescribes, and it does really nasty things to body, mind, and soul.¹¹⁷

I get the impression that most things sold as nutraceuticals are shady; to authorities, illegal nutraceuticals are probably like a water balloon, where you step on it one place and it just slides over a bit to the side. It used to be that there were perhaps a dozen major street drugs on the scene; now there is a vast bazaar where some “nutraceuticals” are squeaky-clean, and some “neutraceuticals” are similar in effect to illegal narcotics but not technically illegal, and some of them are selling testosterone without medical supervision, or worse.

So, buyer beware. There’s some good stuff out there (I haven’t talked about goji berries), but if you want a healthy diet to go with healthy living, read and cook from *Nourishing Traditions*¹¹⁸ or better Paleo.

Old Technologies

There is a Foxtrot cartoon where the mother is standing outside with Jason and saying something like, “This is how you throw a frisbee.” “This is how you play catch.” “This is how you play tennis.” And Jason answers, “Enough with the historical re-enactments. I want to play some games!”

Old technologies are usually things that caused

¹¹⁷ Steroid abuse in today’s society, accessed September 20, 2022, <https://deadiversion.usdoj.gov/pubs/brochures/steroids/professionals/>.

¹¹⁸ Sally Fallon et al., *Nourishing Traditions: The Cookbook That Challenges Politically Correct Nutrition and the Diet Dictocrats* (Washington, DC: NewTrends Publishing, Inc., 2005).

changes, and moved people away from what might be called more natural forms of life. However, they represent a lower “drug dose” than newer technologies. The humble lead pencil may be historically be the kind of technology that converted cultures away from being oral; however, a handwritten letter to an old friend is profoundly different from a stream of texts. In my technological soliloquy above, two of the three technologies I mentioned represent an old tradition. Being familiar with some of the best of older technologies may be helpful, and in general they do not have the layers on layers of fragile character that have been baked into new technologies. A Swiss Army Knife is still a portable toolchest if something messes up with the Internet. Bicycles are not a replacement for cars—you can’t go as fast or as far, or stock up on groceries—but many people prefer bicycles when they are a live option, and a good bicycle has far fewer points of failure than a new car.

I noted when I was growing up that a power failure meant, “Office work stops.” Now more recently an internet or network failure means, “Office work stops,” and there is someone who said, “Systems integration is when your computer doesn’t work because of a problem on a computer you never knew existed.” Older technologies are in general not so fragile, and have more of a buffer zone before you get in to the damned backswing.

Online forums (“fora,” for the more precise)

Online forums are something of a mixed blessing. They can allow discussion of obscure topics, and have many of the benefits of the long tail. I happily referred someone who was learning Linux to unix.stackexchange.com. But the blessing is mixed, and when I talked with my priest about

rough stuff on an Orthodox forum, he said, “People love to talk about Orthodoxy. The real challenge is to do it.”

Online forums may be more wisely used to consult for information and knowhow, but maybe not the best place to find friends, or perhaps a good place to find friends, but not a good place to use for friendship.

Planned obsolescence, fashion, and being built NOT to last

When I made one visit to the Dominican Republic, one thing that surprised me was that a substantial number of the vehicles I saw were Mercedes-Benz or other luxury brands by U.S. standards, while there were no or almost no U.S. cars. The reason for this is that you can keep a German engineered car up and running for 30 years if you take care of it; with a U.S. car you are doing well to have a car still running after 10 years. German cars, among others, are engineered and built to last; U.S. cars are engineered and built NOT to last. And in the Dominican Republic economy, buying a car that may well run for 30 years is something people can afford; buying a car that may only last 5-7 years is a luxury people cannot afford. An old but well-cared-for Mercedes Benz, Saab, Volvo, or BMW will probably last longer than a new car which is “imported from Detroit.”

One of the features of an industrial economy is that the economy needs to have machines in production and people buying things. If we ask the question, “Was economic wealth made for man, or man for economic wealth?” the decisive answer of industrial economy is, “Man was made for economic wealth.” There are artificial measures taken to manipulate culture so as to maximize production and consumption of economic wealth, three of

which are planned obsolescence, fashion, and being built NOT to last.

Planned obsolescence socially enforces repeat purchases by making goods that will have a better version available soon; in computers relatively little exploration is done to make a computer that will last a long time, because computers usually only need to last until they're obsolete, and that level of quality is "good enough for government work." I have an iPhone 4 and am glad not to be using my needlessly snail-like AT&T-serviced iPhone 1, but I am bombarded by advertisements telling me that I need an iPhone 4S, implying that my iPhone 4 just doesn't cut it any more. As a matter of fact, my iPhone 4 works quite nicely, and I ignored a link advertising a free port of the iPhone 4's distinctive feature Sila. I'm sure that if I forked out and bought an iPhone 4S, it would not be long before I saw advertisements breeding discontent about my spiffy iPhone 4S, and giving me a next hot feature to covet.

In the Middle Ages, fashion changed in clothing about once per generation, if even that.¹¹⁹ In our culture, we have shifting fashions that create a manufactured social need to purchase new clothing frequently, more like once per year. People do not buy clothing nearly so often because it is worn out and too threadbare to keep using, but because fashion shifted and such-and-such is in. Now people may be spending less on fashion-driven purchases than before, but it is still not a mainstream practice to throw a garment out because further attempts to mend it will not really help.

¹¹⁹ Dolores Monet, "Fashion History of the High and Late Middle Ages: Medieval Clothing," Bellatory (Bellatory, January 25, 2011), <https://bellatory.com/fashion-industry/FashionHistoryoftheHighandLateMiddleAgesClothingofthe11th-15thCentury>.

And lastly, there is the factor of things being made to break down. There are exceptions; it is possible for things to be built to last. I kept one Swiss Army Knife for twenty years, with few repairs beyond WD-40 and the like—and at the end of those twenty years, I gave it as a fully functional hand-me-down to someone who appreciated it. There is a wide stripe of products where engineers tried to engineer something to last and last, and not just German engineers. However, this is an exception and not the rule in the U.S. economy. I was incredulous when a teacher told me that the engineering positions some of us would occupy would have an assignment to make something that would last for a while and then break down. But it's true. Clothing, for instance, can be built to last. However, if you buy expensive new clothing, it will probably wear out. Goodwill and other second-hand stores sometimes have things that are old enough to be built to last, but I haven't found things to be that much sturdier: your mileage may vary. And culturally speaking, at least before present economic difficulties, when an appliance breaks you do not really take it in for repairs. You replace it with a newer model.

All of these things keep purchases coming so the gears of factories will continue. Dorothy Sayers' "The Other Six Deadly Sins" talks about how a craftsman will want to make as good an article as possible, while mechanized industry will want to make whatever will keep the machines' gears turning.¹²⁰ That means goods that are made to break down, even when it is technologically feasible for factories to turn out things that are built to last.

¹²⁰ See extended quotation of the essay at C.J.S. Hayward, "Branding Is the New Root of All Evil," CJS Hayward, July 3, 2021, <https://cjshayward.com/branding-is-the-new-root-of-all-evil/>.

All of these answer the question, “Was economic wealth made for man, or man for economic wealth?” with a resounding, “Man was made for economic wealth.”

Porn and things connected to porn

There is a story about a philosopher who was standing in a river when someone came to him. The philosopher asked the visitor, “What do you want?” The visitor answered, “Truth!” Then the philosopher held the visitor under the water for a little while, and asked him the second time, “What do you want?” The visitor answered, “Truth!” Then the philosopher held the visitor under water for what seemed an interminable time, and let him up and asked, “What do you want?” The visitor gasped and said, “Air!” The philosopher said, “When you want Truth the way you want air, you will find it.”

The same thing goes for freedom from the ever-darker chain called pornography, along with masturbation and the use of “ED” drugs to heighten thrills (which can cause nasty street drug-like effects even in marriage). To quote the Sermon on the Mount:¹²¹

“Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, ‘Thou shalt not commit adultery:’ but I say unto you, Whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.

“And if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish,

¹²¹ Matthew 5:27-30, Classic Orthodox Bible.

and not that thy whole body should be cast into Hell. And if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into Hell.

The Church Fathers are clear enough that this must not be taken literally; canon law forbids self-castration. But if you want to be free from addiction to pornography, if you want such freedom the way you want air, then you will do whatever it takes to remove the addiction.

What are your options? I'm not going to imitate the Dilbert strip's mentioning, "How to lose weight by eating less food," but there are some real and concrete steps you can take. If you shut off your internet service, and only check email and conduct internet business in public places with libraries, that might be the price for purity. If you are married, you might use one of many internet filters, set up with a password that is only known to your wife. You could join a men's sexual addiction support group; that may be the price of freedom from porn, and it is entirely worth it. The general rule of thumb in confession is not to go into too much detail in confessing sexual sins, but going to confession (perhaps frequently, if your priest or spiritual father allows it) can have a powerful "I don't want to confess this sin" effect. Another way to use the Internet is only go to use it when you have a defined purpose, and avoid free association browsing which often goes downhill. You could ask prayers of the saints, especially St. Mary of Egypt and St. John the Long-Suffering of the Kiev Near Caves. You could read and pray "The Canon of Repentance to Our Lord

Jesus Christ” in the Jordanville prayer book,¹²² if your priest so blesses.

Lust is the disenchantment of the entire universe: first it drains wonder and beauty out of everything else, and then it drains wonder and beauty out of itself: the only goal of lust is more lust. It works like a street drug. St. Basil the Great compared lust to a dog licking a saw: the dog keeps licking it because it likes the taste it produces, but it does not know that it is tasting its own woundedness, and the longer it keeps up at this, the deeper the wounds become.

And what comes after lusting at porn? Another act, one that offers a final exploitation of an unhappy model or two’s miserable, toxic performance. All you are using her performance is for really, only one act...

Furthermore, an account of fighting sexual sin is incomplete if we do not discuss gluttony. What is above the belt is very close to what is below the belt, and the Fathers saw a tight connection between gluttony and lust. Gluttony is the gateway drug to lust. “Sear your loins with fasting,” the Fathers in the *Philokalia* tells us; the demon of lust goes out with prayer and fasting.

Sacramental shopping

I remember when I had one great struggle before surrendering, letting go of buying a computer for my studies, and then an instant later feeling compelled to buy it. The only difference was that one was sacramental shopping to get something I really needed, and the other was just getting what I needed with the “sacramental shopping” taken out.

In American culture and perhaps others, the whole

¹²² *Prayer Book* (Jordanville, NY: Holy Trinity Monastery, 2011).

advertising industry and the shape of the economy gives a great place to “sacramental shopping”, or shopping as an ersatz sacrament that one purchases not because it is useful or any other legitimate concern, but because it delivers a sense of well-being. Consider Starbucks, for instance. Some have argued that today’s brand economy is doing the job of spiritual disciplines: hence a teacher asks students, “Imagine your future successful self. With what brands do you imagine yourself associating?” and getting no puzzled looks or other body language indicating that students found the question strange. I’ve mentioned brands I consume both prestigious and otherwise; perhaps this piece would be better if I omitted mention of brands. However, even if one rejects the ersatz spirituality of brands, not all brands are created equal; my previous laptop was an IBM Thinkpad I used for years before it stopped working, and the one before that was an Acer that demonstrated “You get what you pay for.” Investing in something good, paid for in cash, without incurring further debt, can be appropriate. Buying for the mystique is spiritual junk food.

“Hang the fashions. Buy only what you need,” is a rejection of brand economy as a spiritual discipline. Buy things on their merits and not because of the prestige of the brand. And learn to ignore the mystique that fuels a culture of discontent. Buy new clothes because your older clothing is wearing out, not because it is out of fashion. (It makes sense to buy classic rather than trendy.)

SecondLife

Most of the other technologies mentioned here are technologies I have dealt with myself, most often at some length. SecondLife by contrast is the one and only of the

technologies on this list I have not even installed due to overwhelming bad intuitions when I have tried to convince myself it was something I should be doing.

It may be, some time later, that SecondLife is no longer called SecondWife, and it is a routine communication technology, used as an audio/visual successor to (purely audio) phone conversations. The web was once escape, one better than the Hitch-hiker's Guide to the Galaxy,¹²³ and now the web can be explored but it is quite often used for common nuts and bolts. No technology is permanently exotic: perhaps sometime the world of SecondLife will seem ordinary. But for now at least, it is an escape into building an alternative reality, and might as well be occult, for the degree of creating a new alternate reality it involves.

Smartphones, tablets, netbooks, laptops, and desktop computers

Jakob Nielsen made a distinction between computers that are *movable*, meaning laptops and netbooks which can be moved with far less difficulty and hassle than a desktop system, and *mobile*, meaning that they are the sort of thing a person can easily carry. Netbooks cross an important line compared to full-sized laptops; a regular laptop weighs enough on the shoulder that you are most likely to take a laptop in its carrying case for a reason, not just carry it like one more thing in a pocket. Netbooks, which weigh in at something like two pounds, are much lighter on the shoulder and they lend themselves more readily to keeping in a backpack, large purse, or bag of holding, without

¹²³ In the book of the same title, Douglas Adams, *The Hitch-Hiker's Guide to the Galaxy* (New York: Del Rey, 2021).

stopping to consider, “Do I really want to carry this extra weight?” Not that this is unique to netbooks; tablets are also light enough to just carry with you. Smartphones cross another important line: they are small enough to keep tucked in your pocket (or on your belt).

I was first astonished when I read that one iPhone user had completely displaced her use of the desktop computer. It surprised me for at least three reasons. First, the iPhone’s screen is tiny compared to even a small desktop screen; one thing programmers tend to learn is the more screen space they have, the better, and if they have any say in the matter, or if they have savvy management, programmers have two screens or one huge screen. Second, especially when I had an iPhone 1 that came with painfully slow and artificially limited bandwidth, the niche for it that I saw was as an emergency surrogate for a real computer that you use when, say, you’re driving to meet someone and something goes wrong. A bandwidth-throttled iPhone 1 may be painfully slow, but it is much better than nothing. Lastly, for someone used to high-speed touch typing on a regular keyboard, the iPhone, as the original Droid commercials stomped on the sore spot, “iDon’t have a real keyboard.” You don’t get better over time at touch typing an iPhone keyboard because the keyboard is one you have to look at; you cannot by touch move over two keys to the left to type your next letter. What I did not appreciate then was that you give the iPhone keyboard more focus and attention than touch-typing a regular keyboard calls for; the “virtual keyboard” is amazing and it works well when you are looking at it and typing with both thumbs. And once that conceptual jolt is past, it works well.

What I didn’t appreciate when that woman said she

had stopped using her computer was that the desktop computer is wherever you have to go to use the desktop computer, while the iPhone is in one's pocket or purse. There is an incumbency advantage to the iPhone that is in your pocket or purse. It's not just that you can only use your home computer when you are at home; if you are in one room and the computer is in another, it is less effort to jot a brief email from the phone than go to the other room and use the computer.

Laziness is a factor here: I have used my iPhone over my computer due to laziness. But more broadly, a desktop or even laptop computer is in something of a sanctuary with fewer distractions; the smartphone is wherever you are, and that may be a place with very few distractions, and it may be a place with many distractions.

Smartphones, tablets, netbooks, laptops, and desktops are all computers. The difference between them is how anchored or how portable they work out to be in practice. The more mobile a computer is, the more effectively it will be as a noise delivery system. The ascetical challenge they represent, and the need to see that we and not the technologies hold the reins, is sharper for the newer and more mobile models.

Social networks

I personally tend not to get sucked in to Facebook; I will go to a social networking site for a very particular reason, and tend not to linger even if I want something to do. There is a reason for this: I had an inoculation. While in high school I served as a student system administrator, on a system whose primary function in actual use was a social network, with messages, chatting, forums, and so on and so

forth. I drank my fill of that, so to speak, and while it was nowhere near so user-friendly as Facebook, it was a drug from the same family.

Having been through that, I would say that this is not what friendship is meant to be. It may be that friends who become physically separated will maintain correspondence, and in that case a thoughtful email is not much different from a handwritten letter. As I wrote in “Technonomicon: Technology, Nature, Ascesis:”¹²⁴

“Social networking” is indeed about people, but there is something about social networking’s promise that is like an ambitious program to provide a tofu “virtual chicken” in every pot: there is something unambiguously social about social media, but there is also something as different from what “social” has meant for well over 99% of people as a chunk of tofu is from real chicken’s meat.

There is a timeless way of relating to other people, and this timeless way is a large part of ascesis. This is a way of relating to people in which one learns to relate primarily to people one did not choose. Friendship had more permanency than many today now give marriage, in which one was dependent on others (that is, interdependent with others), in which people did not by choice say goodbye to everyone they knew at once, as one does by moving in America, and a social interaction was largely through giving one’s immediate presence.

¹²⁴ C.J.S. Hayward, “Technonomicon: Technology, Nature, Ascesis,” CJS Hayward, March 4, 2020, <https://cjs Hayward.com/technonomicon/>.

“Social networking” is a very different beast. You choose whom to relate to, and you can set the terms; it is both easy and common to block users, nor is this considered a drastic measure. Anonymity is possible and largely encouraged; relationships can be transactional, which is one step beyond disposable, and many people never meet others they communicate with face-to-face, and for that matter, arranging a face-to-face meeting is special because of its exceptional character.

Social networking can have a place. Tofu can have a place. However, we would do well to take a cue to attend to cultures that have found a proper traditional place for tofu. Asian cuisines may be unashamed about using tofu, but they consume it in moderation—and never use it to replace meat.

We need traditional social “meat.” The members of the youngest generation who have the most tofu in their diet may need “meat” the most.

“Teleporters”

I use the term “teleporters” because I do not know of a standard name, besides perhaps the name of one of the eight capital vices, for a class of technologies and other things that are in ways very different from each other but all have the same marketing proposition: escape. Not that one needs technologies to do this; metaphysics in the occult sense is another means to the same end. But all of them deliver escape.

A collection of swords is not usually amassed for defense: the owner may be delighted at the chance to learn how to handle a medieval sword, but even if the swords are “battle ready” the point is not self-defense. It’s a little bit of

something that transports us to another place. Same thing for movies and video games. Same thing for historical reenactments. Same thing, for that matter, for romances that teach women to covet a relationship with a man that could never happen, and spurn men and possibilities where a genuinely happy marriage can happen.

There are many things whose marketing proposition is escape, and they all peter out and leave us coveting more. They are spiritual poison if they are used for escape. There may be other uses and legitimate reasons—iPhones are, besides being “avoid spiritual work” systems, incredibly useful—but the right use of these things is not found in the marketing proposition they offer you.

Television

Television has been partially ousted with Facebook; TV is stickier than ever, “sticky” meaning that a technology, website, app, show, etc. hooks you in to continued use once you have started using it, but it still can’t compete with the web’s stickiest sites.¹²⁵

However, a couple of Far Side cartoons on television are worth pondering; if they were written today, they might mention more than TV.

In one cartoon, the caption reads, “In the days before television,” and a whole family is staring blankly at a blank spot on a wall, curled around it as if it were a television. The irony, of course, is that this is not what things were like before television began sucking the life out of everything. The days before television were that much more dynamic

¹²⁵ Paul Graham, “The Acceleration of Addictiveness,” The acceleration of addictiveness, accessed September 15, 2022, <http://www.paulgraham.com/addiction.html>.

and vibrant; Gary Larson's cartoon, with a cartoon that simply subtracts television from the eighties, is dripping with ironic clarity about precisely what the days before television were not.

In another cartoon, an aboriginal tribesman stands at the edge of a chasm, a vine bridge having just been cut and fallen into the chasm and making the chasm impassible. The tribesman was holding a television. On the other side were a group of angry middle-class suburbanites. The caption read, "And so Mbogo stood, the angry suburbanites standing on the other side of the chasm. Their idol was now his, as well as its curse."

Some years back, an advertising executive wrote, *Four Arguments for the Elimination of Television*¹²⁶ (one friend said in mock puzzlement, "The author could only think of four?"), and though the book is decades old, it speaks today. All other technologies that have been stealing television's audiences do what television did, only more effectively and with more power.

I said at one point that the television is the most expensive appliance you can own. The reasoning was simple. For a toaster or a vacuum cleaner, if it doesn't break, it costs you the up front purchase price, along with electricity, gas, or any other utilities it uses. And beyond those two, there is no further cost as long as it works. But with television, there was the most powerful propaganda engine yet running, advertising that will leave you keeping up with the Joneses, or, as some have argued after comparing 1950's kitchen appliances with 1990's kitchen appliances, keeping up with the Trumps. In this ongoing

¹²⁶ Jerry Mander, *Four Arguments for the Elimination of Television* (New York: Perennial an imprint of HarperCollins Publishers, 2002).

stream, the programming is the packaging and the advertising is the real content. The packaging is designed not to steal the show from the content. Today, television rules less vast of a realm, but megasites deliver the same principle: the reason you go to the website is a bit of wrapping, and the product being sold, is *you*.

Our economy is in a rough state, but welcome to keeping up with the Trumps version 2.0. The subscription fees for smartphones and tablets are just the beginning.

The timeless way of relating

Christopher Alexander saw that computers were going to be the next building, and he was the champion who introduced computer-aided design to the field of architecture. Then he came to a second realization, that computer-aided design may make some things easier and faster, but it does not automatically make a building better: computer aided design makes it easier to architect good and bad buildings alike, and if you ask computers to make better buildings, you're barking up the wrong fire hydrant.

But this time his work, *The Timeless Way of Building*,¹²⁷ fell on deaf ears in the architectural community... only to be picked up by software developers and be considered an important part of object-oriented software design. The overused term, MVC ("model-view-controller"), which appears in job descriptions when people need a candidate who solves problems well, whether or not that meant using MVC, is part of the outflow of object-oriented programming seeing something deep in patterns. Some programmers have taken a profound lesson from *The*

¹²⁷ Christopher Alexander, *The Timeless Way of Building* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1979).

*Timeless Way of Building*¹²⁸ even if good programmers in an interview have to conceal an allergic reaction when MVC is presented as a core competency for almost any kind of project.

There really is A Timeless Way of Building, and Alexander finds it in some of ancient and recent architecture alike. In the same vein there is a timeless way of relating. In part, we may see it as one more piece of it is dismantled by one more technology migration, but there is a real and live timeless relating, and not just through rejecting technologies.

C.S. Lewis, in a passage in *That Hideous Strength*,¹²⁹ talks about how everything is coming to a clearer and sharper point. Abraham was not wrong for his polygamy as we would be for polygamy, but there is some sense that he didn't profit from it. Merlin was not something from the sixth century, but the last survival in the sixth century of something much older. Things that have been gray, perhaps not beneficial even if they are not forbidden, are more starkly turning to black or white.

This is one of the least convincing passages for Lewis's effort to speak of "mere Christianity." I am inclined to think that something of the exact opposite is true, that things that have been black and white in ages past have more leniency, more grey. Not necessarily that leniency equals confusion; Orthodoxy has two seemingly antithetical but both necessary principles of *akgravia* (striving for strict excellence) and *oikonomia* (the principle

¹²⁸ Christopher Alexander, *The Timeless Way of Building* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1979).

¹²⁹ C.S. Lewis, "That Hideous Strength," Internet Archive, January 1, 1970, <https://archive.org/details/in.ernet.dli.2015.207839/page/n5/mode/2up>.

of mercifully relaxing the letter of the law). We seem to live in a time of *oikonomia* from the custom which has the weight of canon law, where (for instance) the ancient upper class did far less physical exertion than the ancient lower class and slaves, but middle class fitness nuts today exercise less than the ancient upper class. Three hours of aerobic exercise is a lot. While we pride ourselves on abolishing legal slavery, we wear not only clothing from sweatshops made at the expense of preventable human misery, but large wardrobes and appliances and other consumer goods that bear a price tag in human misery. Many Orthodox Christians have rejected the position of the Fathers on contraception from time immemorial, and the Church has been secularized enough for many to get their bearings from one article.¹³⁰

But two things are worth mentioning here. The first is that this is a time that invites prophets. Read the Old Testament prophets: prophets, named “the called ones” in the Old Testament, never come when things are going well to say “Keep it up. Carry on your good work!” They come in darker days.

Second, while we live in a time where mere gloom is called light and we rely on much more *oikonomia* than others, *oikonomia* is real Orthodoxy in proper working order, and in ways Orthodoxy with *oikonomia* is much greater than rigidly rejecting *oikonomia*. The people who call themselves “True Orthodox”, or now that “True Orthodox” sounds fishy, call themselves “Genuine

¹³⁰ Chrysostom Zaphiris, "Morality of Contraception: An Eastern Orthodox Opinion," *Journal of Ecumenical Studies*, volume 11, number 4, fall 1974, 677-90, discussed in C.J.S. Hayward, "Orthodoxy, Contraception, and Spin Doctoring: A Look at an Influential but Disturbing Article," CJS Hayward, June 12, 2021, <https://cjshayward.com/contraception/>.

Orthodox” to avoid the troubles they have created for the name of “True Orthodox.” Despite observing the letter of canons more scrupulously than even the most straight-laced of normal Orthodox Christians, these people are people who don’t get Orthodoxy, and would do well to receive the penance of eating a thick steak on a strict fast day.

And despite having so many slices taken out, the timeless way of relating is alive and well. It is present at a meal around table with friends. It is present when a man and wife remain together “til death do us part.” It is present when Catholics adore the Eucharist, or Evangelicals don’t miss a Sunday’s church for years and keep up with their quiet times and Bible studies. “Conversation is like texting for adults,” said our deacon, and the timeless way of relating is there when people use texting to arrange a face-to-face visit. The timeless way of relating is always close at hand.

Vaccines

In time past, DDT stopped an insect-borne epidemic cold in its tracks, and then had another coup: in Vietnam, over 50% of the casualties were caused by malaria, while with spraying DDT, malaria was stopped cold, leaving soldiers free to pay attention to other matters. It was not without reason that people thought of how to deal with insect pests in DDT-shaped terms.

Today we live after vaccination has wiped certain childhood diseases almost completely off the planet, and we have vaccine-shaped expectations for how we can deal with COVID-19. With DDT there was fish kill, and the frogs were not singing when they should have been, and vaccination

has had deadly results (a pulmonary embolism here,¹³¹ terminal cancer there, maybe in Israel many people suffering from a new AIDS when their immune systems have been destroyed by vaccines). We still hope for a vaccine, and read with apparent pleasure that new vaccines will target the whole family of viruses SARS and COVID belong to.

Orthodox Christians do not have business receiving a blood-stained vaccine,¹³² and if they have already received some vaccination (I had a first dose when I caved to pressure), do not have business having further blood-stained vaccine.

The “vaccines” are deadly and may amount to a genocide of all kinds of innocent people in one of our day’s Holocausts that, if it has not killed more Jews than Hitler, is well on its way.

This may sound conspiracy-ish, to which I protest that my sources are all on mainstream sources and recall the famous joke:

Q: What’s the difference between a conspiracy theory and news?

A: About two months.

¹³¹ Suffered by Yours Truly, after a first dose only of Pfizer-Biotech. Undetected or untreated, it would have killed me before I could write this.

¹³² See Frankie Vaughan, “Covid-19 Vaccines Developed with Human Embryonic Cells - Expert Reaction ,” Science Media Centre, February 11, 2021, <https://www.sciencemediacentre.co.nz/2020/08/27/covid-19-vaccines-developed-with-human-embryonic-cells-expert-reaction/>. Taking a vaccine creates demand for vaccines that were created with the moral cost of bloodguilt.

I was told, on an infamous OTSA factsheet mailed to my parish mailing list in support of my heirarch who had chosen to be publicly vaccinated, which opened just below its first header, “Vaccines are a safe way to prevent viral infections.” They are not. They can have deadly effects, and they can destroy a woman’s capacity to reproduce. (And telling e.g. about a woman whose body had ejected a good part of her uterine wall after receiving an injection, was part of how feminist Christiane Northrup managed to go from being one of the 100 most trusted people in America to being on a disinformation dozen.)¹³³ And none of the vaccine backers I have heard of have backed off in the least on evidence that people are being killed and harmed by the vaccine once it is in use.

Video games

I was introduced to the computer game rogue and while in school wanted to play Rogue / UltraRogue for as long as I could. When I decided in grad school that I wanted to learn to program, I wrote a crufty and difficult-to-understand Roguelike game implemented in 60,000 lines of C.

¹³³ Christiane Northrup, “Could Their Shot Be Harming You?,” Rumble, accessed September 20, 2022, <https://rumble.com/vfzodp-could-their-shot-be-harming-you.html>. The gathering of dissidents includes some crackpots, but remember that people who innovate in scientific discovery are often considered crackpots until their views are accepted. Hence a rough English translation of a German original in Phillip Lopate, “One Hundred Authors Against Einstein,” Amazon (Anchor, 2021), <https://www.amazon.com/One-Hundred-Authors-Against-Einstein/dp/B09PHH7KC8>. Einstein’s response: “If I were wrong, then one [author] would have been enough!” (Albert Einstein and Alice Calaprice, *The Ultimate Quotable Einstein* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2013), 170).

Those many hours I played in that fantasy land were my version of time lost in television. There are things I could have done that I didn't: create something, explore outside, write letters. As primitive and humble as Rogue may be, it stems from the same root as World of Warcraft. It is one of several technologies I have tasted in an egg: Rogue, UltraRogue, The Minstrel's Song, and different MUDs; or a command-line computer doing the work of a social network. These are precursors to MMO's and Facebook. The newer games and social network may connect more dots and do some of your imagining for you. The core remains: you sit in front of a computer, transported to a fantasy land, and not exploring the here and now that you have been placed in, in all its richness.

The Web

When I was a boy and when I was a youth, it was a sheer delight to go to Honey Rock Camp. I don't want to elaborate on all of my fond memories but I would like to point to one memory in particular: the web.

Resourceful people had taken a World War II surplus piece of netting, attached it to the edges of a simple building, and pulled the center up by a rope. The result was everything a child wants from a waterbed, and I remember, for instance, kids gathering on the far side of the web, my climbing up the rope, and then letting go and dropping five or ten feet into the web, sending little children flying. As with my other macho ways of connecting with children, if I did this once I was almost certainly asked to do it again. (The same goes, for some extent, with throwing children into the web.)

I speak of that web in the past tense, because after

decades of being a cherished attraction, the web was falling apart and it was no longer a safe attraction. The people in charge made every effort to replace it, and found to everyone's dismay that they couldn't. Nobody makes those nets; and apparently nobody has one of those nets available, or at least not for sale. In that regard, the web is a characteristic example of how technologies are handled in the U.S. ("Out with the old, in with the new!"). Old things are discarded, so the easily available technologies are just the newer one.

Software is fragile; most technological advances in both software and hardware are more fragile than what they replace. Someone said, "If builders built buildings the way programmers write programs, the first woodpecker that came along would destroy civilization." The web is a tremendous resource, but it will not last forever, and there are many pieces of our complex interlocking mesh of technologies that could limit or shut off the web. Don't assume that because the web is available today it will equally well be available indefinitely.

Wittgenstein's "Forms of life"

I'm not Wittgenstein's biggest fan, and I wince when people speak of "after Wittgenstein." But his concept of "forms of life" is relevant here. A form of life is something that is structural to how people live, and normally tacit; my philosophy professor was searching for an example of "forms of life" to give to his class, and after a couple of minutes of silence I said, "You are trying to a difficult thing. You are trying to find something that is basically tacit and not consciously realized, but that people will recognize once it is pointed out. I guess that you have thought of a few

possibilities and rejected them because they fall around on one of those criteria.” He searched a bit more, and gave the example of, “It used to be that procreation was seen as necessary for human flourishing. Now people think that limiting procreation is seen as necessary for human flourishing.”

Arguably a Luddite’s Guide to Forms of Life would be more useful than “The Luddite’s Guide to Technology,” but in the discussion of different technologies there is always a concern for what Wittgenstein would call “forms of life.” It is possible to turn on the television for 10 minutes a day for weather information, and that retains the same form of life as not using television at all. Watching television for hours a day is, and shapes, a distinct form of life. And in some sense the basic question addressed in this work is not, “What technologies are you using?” but “What forms of life do you have, given your technology usage?”

Conclusion

This work has involved, perhaps, too much opinion and too much of the word “I”; true Orthodox theology rarely speaks of me, “myself, and I,” and in the rare case when it is really expedient to speak of oneself, the author usually refers to himself in the third person.

The reason I have referred to myself is that I am trying to make a map that many of us are trying to make sense of. There is a very simple answer given in monasticism, where renunciation of property includes technology even if obediences may include working with it. The words “Lay not up for yourselves treasures on earth”¹³⁴ offer another simple answer. Those of us who live in the

¹³⁴ Matthew 6:19, Classic Orthodox Bible.

world are bound not to be attached to possessions, even if they own them. *The Ladder of Divine Ascent* offers a paragraph addressed to married people and a book addressed to monastics, but it has been read with great profit by all manner of people, married as well as monastic.

Somewhere amidst these great landmarks I have tried to situate my writing. I do not say that it is one of these landmarks; it may be that the greatest gift is a work that will spur a much greater Orthodox Christian to do a much better job.

My godfather offered me many valuable corrections when I entered the Orthodox Church, but there is one and only one I would take issue with. He spoke of the oddity of writing something like “the theology of the hammer”; and my own interest in different sources, stemming from reading technological determinist authors like Neil Postman. Even if a stopped clock is right twice a day, their Marxism is a toxic brew.

However, I write less from the seductive effects of those books. My writing is not because they have written XYZ but because I have experienced certain things in mystical experience. I have a combined experience of decades helping run a Unix box that served as a social network, and playing MUDs, and sampling their newer counterparts. My experience in Orthodox Christianity has found great mystical truth and depth in the words, “Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit.”¹³⁵ Part of that pruning has been the involuntary removal of my skills as a mathematics student; much of it has been in relation to technology. The Bible has

¹³⁵ John 15:2, Classic Orthodox Bible.

enough to say about wealth and property as it existed millennia ago; it would be strange to say that “Lay not up for yourselves treasures on earth” speaks to livestock and owning precious metals but has nothing to do with iPads.

One saint said that the end will come when one person no longer makes a path to visit another. With social media, we now have the technology to do that.

Let our technology be used ascetically, or not at all.

Discussion questions for “A Guide to Technology’s Hidden Price Tags”

1. What technology or issue strikes you as most salient of those that are raised?
2. Is there any technology that you are never going to look at the same way again? If so, what is it and why?
3. What hidden price tags do the technologies you use cost you?
4. Have you considered, speaking literally, that it may be easier not to eat a cookie than to burn it off in the gym? If so, how?
5. Have you considered, speaking figuratively, that it may be easier not to eat a cookie than to burn it off in the gym?
6. What would you like to partially abstain from now?

7. What would you like to completely abstain from now?
8. If you are in the trap of using porn, what can you do to want sexual purity like you want air?
9. What is the biggest thing you realize you need to take to confession, whether or not you are ashamed of it or not?
10. Do you need what you can afford?
11. What can you afford that you don't really and truly need?

Introduction to “The Magic Stone”

One of the hidden costs of today e.g. Facebook is that if you want to stop and do something else, there seems to be “nothing to do.”

This chapter opens with a quotation summarizing a children’s book about “nothing to do,” and then lists over a hundred things to do besides being sucked into Facebook. The point is not that you should do all of them; the hope is that somewhere in that list will be one or a few things that you can use in a gainful manner.

The Magic Stone

I quote one of the three major sources I've read on
TV:

There's a picture book by Russel Hoban called *Nothing to Do* that illuminates the value of free time for children, and the importance of helping them learn how to deal with it. Hoban's book opens with little Walter Possum, a member of an endearing family of humanoid possums, who bothers his parents because he has "nothing to do." Father Possum tells Walter to "play with your toys." But Walter doesn't feel like it. The father assigns him a job—to rake the leaves. But Walter soon loses interest. The only activity that seems to relieve the tedium is quarreling with his sister Charlotte, a terrible pest.

When Mother Possum needs to clean

the house, Father gives Walter a smooth brown stone and instructs him to run it when he has nothing to do. It is a magic stone, Father tells him. “You have to look around and think while you’re rubbing it, and then the stone gives you something to do.”

Naturally, belief in the magic of the stone leads Walter to discover all manner of things to do. He finds a long-lost ball, he visits a friend, he dreams up a buried treasure game. He even devises a clever way to keep his irksome little sister from interrupting his game by presenting her with a stick that is also invested with putative magic powers. Besides having fun, he stays out of his parents’ hair all afternoon.

—Marie Winn, *The Plug-in Drug*¹³⁶

My biggest point taken away from reading *The Plug-in Drug*¹³⁷ was that television (today one might add “and Facebook, video games, Facebook games...”) drops things to do into the hand as incredibly low-hanging fruit. There are other, more enjoyable and more rewarding things to do with our time (who really feels good after an evening of trawling clickbait?), but they do not do the service of dropping into our hand. This has the result that if you are used to Facebook or TV giving you something to do, it’s hard not to sit and do nothing besides staring at the wall because you

¹³⁶ Marie Winn, *The Plug-in Drug: Television, Computers, and Family Life*, New York: Penguin 2002, 138-9.

¹³⁷ Marie Winn, *The Plug-in Drug: Television, Computers, and Family Life*, New York: Penguin 2002.

do not see anything to do.

This page is meant to help you find something to do.

This page, in imitation of a writing prompts page, is intended to remind the reader of other things to do. Many of them are not as easy as Twitter, and some of them involve learning real skill. However, I believe that a good pick from the options here could help us get back from “Nothing to do” besides YouTube.

1. Read *101 Creative Dates: Ideas, Tips, and Personal Experiences from the Life of a Hopeless Romantic*¹³⁸ (available from <https://tinyurl.com/101-creative-dates>) and look for ideas that might apply to you whether or not you have a significant other.
2. Take up adult Legos.
3. Start attending an Orthodox parish.¹³⁹
4. Keep an aquarium.
5. Read and follow up on *Nourishing Traditions*,¹⁴⁰ and then *The Paleo Solution: The Original Human*

¹³⁸ “101 Creative Dates: Ideas, Tips, and Personal Experiences from the Life of a Hopeless Romantic: Taylor, Matt: 9781977084996: Amazon.com: Books,” 101 Creative Dates: ideas, tips, and personal experiences from the life of a hopeless romantic: Taylor, Matt: 9781977084996: Amazon.com: Books, accessed November 18, 2022, <https://tinyurl.com/101-creative-dates/>.

¹³⁹ A parish locator for one Orthodox jurisdiction is available as Aleksandr Andreev, “Parish and Clergy Directory,” ROCOR Parish and Clergy Directory, accessed November 18, 2022, <https://directory.stinnocentpress.com/>.

¹⁴⁰ Sally Fallon et al., *Nourishing Traditions: The Cookbook That Challenges Politically Correct Nutrition and the Diet Dictocrats* (Washington, DC: NewTrends Publishing, Inc., 2005).

*Diet.*¹⁴¹

6. Learn a musical instrument, perhaps a recorder.
7. Learn to sew.
8. Learn the art of memory (as in *Kevin Trudeau's Mega Memory*¹⁴²) even if it doesn't live up to the advertising hype.
9. Learn how to take works from Project Gutenberg and read them in your Kindle or ebook reader. You might start with reading *The Consolation of Philosophy*.¹⁴³
10. Take up coin collecting.
11. Take a camping trip.
12. Take up origami.
13. Read “ ‘Social Antibodies’ Needed: A Request of Orthodox Clergy,”¹⁴⁴ included in volume four of this series.
14. Take up knitting.

¹⁴¹ Robb Wolf, *Paleo Solution: The Original Human Diet* (Victory Belt Publishing, 2017).

¹⁴² Kevin Trudeau, in *Kevin Trudeau's Mega Memory: How to Release Your Superpower Memory in 30 Minutes or Less a Day* (New York: Harper, 2005).

¹⁴³ Boethius and James, “The Consolation of Philosophy by Boethius,” Project Gutenberg, December 11, 2004, <https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/14328>.

¹⁴⁴ C.J.S. Hayward, *Hidden Price Tags: An Eastern Orthodox Look at the Dark Side of Technology and Its Best Use, Volume 4: Nitty, Gritty Ascesis*, Spotsylvania: C.J.S. Hayward Publications, 2023.

15. Read “How Can I Take my Life Back from my Phone?”¹⁴⁵ earlier in this volume.
16. Read “55 New Maxims for the Cyber-Quarantine,”¹⁴⁶ included earlier in this volume.
17. Join a class or activity with your park district.
18. Read “The Silicon Rule,”¹⁴⁷ included earlier in this volume.
19. Stargaze.
20. Take up jewelry making.
21. Read “Ask for the Ancient Ways,”¹⁴⁸ included in volume four of this series.
22. Join a book discussion club.
23. Read “The Angelic Letters,”¹⁴⁹ included in volume two of this series.

¹⁴⁵ C.J.S. Hayward, *Hidden Price Tags: An Eastern Orthodox Look at the Dark Side of Technology and Its Best Use, Volume One: Start Here...*, Spotsylvania: C.J.S. Hayward Publications, 2023.

¹⁴⁶ C.J.S. Hayward, *Hidden Price Tags: An Eastern Orthodox Look at the Dark Side of Technology and Its Best Use, Volume One: Start Here...*, Spotsylvania: C.J.S. Hayward Publications, 2023.

¹⁴⁷ C.J.S. Hayward, *Hidden Price Tags: An Eastern Orthodox Look at the Dark Side of Technology and Its Best Use, Volume One: Start Here...*, Spotsylvania: C.J.S. Hayward Publications, 2023.

¹⁴⁸ C.J.S. Hayward, *Hidden Price Tags: An Eastern Orthodox Look at the Dark Side of Technology and Its Best Use, Volume Four: Nitty, Gritty Ascesis*, Spotsylvania: C.J.S. Hayward Publications, 2023.

¹⁴⁹ C.J.S. Hayward, *Hidden Price Tags: An Eastern Orthodox Look at the Dark Side of Technology and Its Best Use, Volume Two: Works of Art*, Spotsylvania: C.J.S. Hayward Publications, 2023.

24. Volunteer, perhaps at a local food pantry.
25. Learn to juggle.
26. Explore local tourist attractions.
27. Take up watercolor painting.
28. Take up model building.
29. Research and practice active listening.
30. Read “What to Own for Happiness (and what not),”¹⁵⁰ included in volume four of this series.
31. Take up amateur acting.
32. Read “Game Review: Meatspace,”¹⁵¹ included in volume two of this series.
33. Buy, and learn to use, a yo-yo. A butterfly yoyo may be easiest.
34. Read “Why I’m Glad I’m Living Now, at This Place, at This Time, in This World,”¹⁵² included in volume four of this series.
35. Walk a mile on the sidewalk without stepping on any

¹⁵⁰ C.J.S. Hayward, *Hidden Price Tags: An Eastern Orthodox Look at the Dark Side of Technology and Its Best Use, Volume Four: Nitty, Gritty Asceticism*, Spotsylvania: C.J.S. Hayward Publications, 2023.

¹⁵¹ C.J.S. Hayward, *Hidden Price Tags: An Eastern Orthodox Look at the Dark Side of Technology and Its Best Use, Volume Two: Works of Art*, Spotsylvania: C.J.S. Hayward Publications, 2023.

¹⁵² C.J.S. Hayward, *Hidden Price Tags: An Eastern Orthodox Look at the Dark Side of Technology and Its Best Use, Volume Four: Nitty, Gritty Asceticism*, Spotsylvania: C.J.S. Hayward Publications, 2023.

cracks.

36. Cloudwatch.
37. Go hiking.
38. Read *Yonder*,¹⁵³ included in volume three of this series.
39. Read “Technology Is Part of Our Poverty,”¹⁵⁴ included in volume four of this series.
40. Spend an hour outside.
41. Keep a journal.
42. Read “Plato: The Allegory of the... *Flickering Screen?*”¹⁵⁵ included in volume three of this series
43. Start and keep a blog.
44. Peoplewatch.
45. Read Roger von Oech's *Creative Whack Pack* at <https://tinyurl.com/creative-whack>.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵³ C.J.S. Hayward, *Hidden Price Tags: An Eastern Orthodox Look at the Dark Side of Technology and Its Best Use, Volume Three: Socratic Dialogue*, Spotsylvania: C.J.S. Hayward Publications, 2023.

¹⁵⁴ C.J.S. Hayward, *Hidden Price Tags: An Eastern Orthodox Look at the Dark Side of Technology and Its Best Use, Volume Four: Nitty, Gritty Ascesis*, Spotsylvania: C.J.S. Hayward Publications, 2023.

¹⁵⁵ C.J.S. Hayward, *Hidden Price Tags: An Eastern Orthodox Look at the Dark Side of Technology and Its Best Use, Volume Three: Socratic Dialogue*, Spotsylvania: C.J.S. Hayward Publications, 2023.

¹⁵⁶ “Creative Whack Pack: Oech, Roger Von,” Creative Whack Pack: Oech, Roger Von, accessed November 18, 2022, <https://tinyurl.com/creative->

46. Read “Mindfulness and Manners,”¹⁵⁷ included in volume four of this series.
47. Take a class at your community college.
48. Read books on *Orthodox Church Fathers* at <https://orthodoxchurchfathers.com>.¹⁵⁸
49. Read “ ‘Religion and Science’ is not Just Intelligent Design vs. Evolution,”¹⁵⁹ included in volume two of this series.
50. Keep a garden.
51. Read “Fire in the Hole,”¹⁶⁰ included in volume seven of this series.
52. Do an act of gratuitous kindness for someone else.
53. Color an adult coloring book.
54. Write a paper letter to an older relative.
55. Visit a local library and find something to start

whack.

¹⁵⁷ C.J.S. Hayward, *Hidden Price Tags: An Eastern Orthodox Look at the Dark Side of Technology and Its Best Use, Volume Four: Nitty, Gritty Ascesis*, Spotsylvania: C.J.S. Hayward Publications, 2023.

¹⁵⁸ “Orthodox Church Fathers,” Orthodox Church Fathers: Patristic Christian Theology Search Engine, accessed November 18, 2022, <https://orthodoxchurchfathers.com/>.

¹⁵⁹ C.J.S. Hayward, *Hidden Price Tags: An Eastern Orthodox Look at the Dark Side of Technology and Its Best Use, Volume Two: Works of Art*, Spotsylvania: C.J.S. Hayward Publications, 2023.

¹⁶⁰ C.J.S. Hayward, *Hidden Price Tags: An Eastern Orthodox Look at the Dark Side of Technology and Its Best Use, Volume Seven: Miscellaneous*, Spotsylvania: C.J.S. Hayward Publications, 2023.

reading.

56. Read “Revelation and Our Singularity,”¹⁶¹ included in volume seven of this series.
57. Take up wood burning.
58. Read “Happiness in an Age of Crisis,”¹⁶² included in volume four of this series.
59. Take up a team sport.
60. Take up sudoku.
61. Read “True ‘Woke’ is Repentance,”¹⁶³ included in volume five of this series.
62. Take up candle making.
63. Take up woodworking.
64. Read “Singularity,”¹⁶⁴ included in volume three of this series.
65. View and follow up on “Depression is a Disease of

¹⁶¹ C.J.S. Hayward, *Hidden Price Tags: An Eastern Orthodox Look at the Dark Side of Technology and Its Best Use, Volume Seven: Miscellaneous*, Spotsylvania: C.J.S. Hayward Publications, 2023.

¹⁶² C.J.S. Hayward, *Hidden Price Tags: An Eastern Orthodox Look at the Dark Side of Technology and Its Best Use, Volume Four: Nitty, Gritty Asceticism*, Spotsylvania: C.J.S. Hayward Publications, 2023.

¹⁶³ C.J.S. Hayward, *Hidden Price Tags: An Eastern Orthodox Look at the Dark Side of Technology and Its Best Use, Volume Five: Longer Works*, Spotsylvania: C.J.S. Hayward Publications, 2023.

¹⁶⁴ C.J.S. Hayward, *Hidden Price Tags: An Eastern Orthodox Look at the Dark Side of Technology and Its Best Use, Volume Three: Socratic Dialogue*, Spotsylvania: C.J.S. Hayward Publications, 2023.

Civilization,” at:

<https://tinyurl.com/depression-is-a>.¹⁶⁵

66. Keep a pet or, if you cannot responsibly own a pet now, visit at a local pet shelter. You don't need to give the impression that you're looking to adopt; most shelters welcome people who will give the pets constructive attention, and if you ask and a pet shelter says they only want people looking to adopt, say "Thank you," and move on to another one.
67. Read *Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*.¹⁶⁶
68. Dig into the puzzles at “Python Challenge,” <https://pythonchallenge.com>.¹⁶⁷
69. Take up oil painting.
70. Read “A Guide to Technology’s Hidden Price Tags,”¹⁶⁸ included earlier in this volume.
71. Do some honest soul-searching, and try to do better.
72. Take up jigsaw puzzles.
73. Read “Veni, Vidi, Vomui: A Look at ‘Do You Want to

¹⁶⁵ “Depression Is a Disease of Civilization: Stephen Ilardi at Tedxemory,” YouTube, May 23, 2013, <https://tinyurl.com/depression-is-a>.

¹⁶⁶ Stephen R. Covey, in *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People* (London: Simon & Schuster UK Ltd., 2020).

¹⁶⁷ “The Python Challenge,” The Python Challenge, accessed November 18, 2022, <http://www.pythonchallenge.com/>.

¹⁶⁸ C.J.S. Hayward, *Hidden Price Tags: An Eastern Orthodox Look at the Dark Side of Technology and Its Best Use, Volume One: Start Here...*, Spotsylvania: C.J.S. Hayward Publications, 2023.

Date my Avatar?’¹⁶⁹ included in volume three of this series.

74. Explore a museum.
75. Read “Orthodox Theology and Technology: A Profoundly Gifted Autobiography,¹⁷⁰” included in volume two of this series.
76. Read “ ‘Physics,’ ”¹⁷¹ included in volume two of this series
77. Get Lego Mindstorms¹⁷² and start hobbyist robotics.
78. Read “Branding is the New Root of All Evil,”¹⁷³ included in volume four of this series.
79. Go walking.
80. Take up geocaching.
81. Take up flower arranging.

¹⁶⁹ C.J.S. Hayward, *Hidden Price Tags: An Eastern Orthodox Guide to the Dark Side of Technology and Its Best Use, Volume Three: Socratic Dialogue*, Spotsylvania: C.J.S. Hayward Publications, 2023.

¹⁷⁰ C.J.S. Hayward, *Hidden Price Tags: An Eastern Orthodox Guide to the Dark Side of Technology and Its Best Use, Volume Two: Works of Art*, Spotsylvania: C.J.S. Hayward Publications, 2023.

¹⁷¹ C.J.S. Hayward, *Hidden Price Tags: An Eastern Orthodox Guide to the Dark Side of Technology and Its Best Use, Volume Two: Works of Art*, Spotsylvania: C.J.S. Hayward Publications, 2023.

¹⁷² “Amazon.com: Lego Mindstorm EV3 Core Set 45544 - New : Toys & Games,” Amazon.com: Lego Mindstorm Ev3 Core Set 45544 - New : Toys & Games, accessed November 18, 2022, <https://amzn.to/3glnhWA>.

¹⁷³ C.J.S. Hayward, *Hidden Price Tags: An Eastern Orthodox Guide to the Dark Side of Technology and Its Best Use, Volume Four: Nitty, Gritty Ascesis*, Spotsylvania: C.J.S. Hayward Publications, 2023.

82. Take up letterboxing.
83. Read *The Consolation of Theology*,¹⁷⁴ included in volume five of this series.
84. Give someone a gift.
85. Learn to cook.
86. Volunteer in English as a Second Language instruction.
87. Read “Beware of Geeks Bearing Gifts,”¹⁷⁵ included in volume two of this series.
88. Learn to play chess.
89. Take up archery.
90. Start birding.
91. Take up bug collecting.
92. Take up sewing.
93. Join Toastmasters.
94. Take up climbing.
95. Apologize to someone you have hurt.

¹⁷⁴ C.J.S. Hayward, *Hidden Price Tags: An Eastern Orthodox Guide to the Dark Side of Technology and Its Best Use, Volume Five: Longer Works*, Spotsylvania: C.J.S. Hayward Publications, 2023.

¹⁷⁵ C.J.S. Hayward, *Hidden Price Tags: An Eastern Orthodox Guide to the Dark Side of Technology and Its Best Use, Volume Two: Works of Art*, Spotsylvania: C.J.S. Hayward Publications, 2023.

96. Read “A Note to the Reader,”¹⁷⁶ included in volume two of this series.
97. Read “Religion Within the Bounds of Amusement,”¹⁷⁷ included in this series.
98. Read “The Arena,”¹⁷⁸ included in volume two of this series.
99. Take up stamp collecting.
100. Ask to join a group of people playing sports or talking in the park.
101. Take up crossword puzzles.
102. Become a clown.
103. Take up balloon sculpting and make balloons for the children you know.

Enjoy any one of these, or just a few.

¹⁷⁶ C.J.S. Hayward, *Hidden Price Tags: An Eastern Orthodox Look at the Dark Side of Technology and Its Best Use, Volume Two: Works of Art*, Spotsylvania: C.J.S. Hayward Publications, 2023.

¹⁷⁷ C.J.S. Hayward, *Hidden Price Tags: An Eastern Orthodox Look at the Dark Side of Technology and Its Best Use, Volume Two: Works of Art*, Spotsylvania: C.J.S. Hayward Publications, 2023.

¹⁷⁸ C.J.S. Hayward, *Hidden Price Tags: An Eastern Orthodox Look at the Dark Side of Technology and Its Best Use, Volume Two: Works of Art*, Spotsylvania: C.J.S. Hayward Publications, 2023.

Discussion questions for “The Magic Stone”

1. What looks like the most interesting activities on the list to you?
2. What look like the least interesting activities on the list?
3. What look like they would best help promote your growth as a person?
4. What can you do today to put a finger in one of these pies?
5. What can you think of to do, now, for the next time you want to get off Facebook but there’s “nothing to do?”
6. What excuses hinder you from doing something else besides being sucked into technology when there’s “nothing to do?”
7. What can you do to overcome any excuses or blocks so you have something to do next time there’s “nothing to do?”⁵

Conclusion¹⁷⁹

We live in times reminiscent of C.S. Lewis, *That Hideous Strength*.¹⁸⁰ The book is perhaps Lewis's most challenging title written for a popular audience, but people who have taken the time to appreciate it appreciate it very much.

My own experience, as America is descending into Hell, is now at a monastery which is very much like St. Anne's, the company of heroes in *That Hideous Strength*. We are tending to a garden as they were. We have a Dr. Ransom, of sorts, in Met. JONAH, and though there are no women, it is as interesting and colorful as a household. There may be other parallels as well. St. Anne's sounds like home now, and home now feels like St. Anne's. And Merlin?

¹⁷⁹ If you've come to this book and wish there were more of it to read, you are welcome to continue with the 750 page magnum opus, C.J.S Hayward, *The Luddite's Guide to Technology* (Wheaton, IL: CJS Hayward Publications, 2014).

¹⁸⁰ C.S. Lewis, "That Hideous Strength," Internet Archive, January 1, 1970, <https://archive.org/details/in.ernet.dli.2015.207839/page/n5/mode/2up>.

To again quote *That Hideous Strength*¹⁸¹ as quoted in part of the introduction to this collection:

“I mean even in Merlin’s time (he came at the extreme tail end of it), though you could still use that kind of [power] in the universe innocently, you couldn’t do it safely. The things weren’t bad in themselves, but they were already bad for us. They sort of withered the man who dealt with him. Not on purpose. They couldn’t help doing it. Merlinus is withered. He’s quite pious and humble and all that, but something has been taken out of him. That quietness of his is just a little bit deadly, like the quiet of a gutted building.”

I’d like to compare all of us to Merlin. Things not bad in themselves are bad for us. You can use their powers innocently, possibly, apart from (for example) concerns of sweatshop manufacturing in China, but you cannot do it safely. When we aren’t getting our intravenous drip of noise, and perhaps even when we are, there is something that has been taken out of us, like the quiet of a gutted building.

Arthur C. Clarke famously said, “Any sufficiently advanced technology is indistinguishable from magic.”¹⁸² Facebook gives new members the sense of walking on water; we have in the Web something much more wondrous

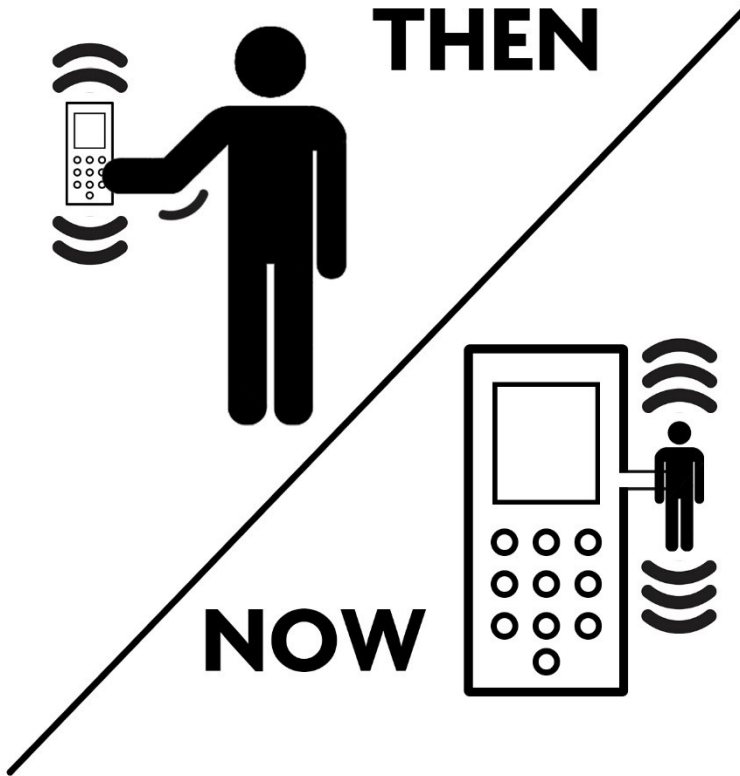
¹⁸¹ C.S. Lewis, “That Hideous Strength,” Internet Archive, January 1, 1970, <https://archive.org/details/in.ernet.dli.2015.207839/page/n5/mode/2up>.

¹⁸² “Clarke’s Three Laws,” Wikipedia (Wikimedia Foundation, September 3, 2022), https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Clarke%27s_three_laws.

than the device for which *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*¹⁸³ was named. Furthermore, we have virtual and augmented reality.

However, I would like to point out one area where the comparison, perhaps, is truer than it may appear at first glance. Magic is classically characterized not just by being able to do things otherwise thought to be impossible (e.g. build a publicly visible website or blog, convey people in a flying machine, talk with someone on the other side of the planet, swim underwater like a fish, keep in touch with a group of friends spread across the globe), but it is also characterized by the Sorcerer's Bargain: "If you give me your soul, I will give you power." However, this bargain is anything but a true bargain. It has classically been said that if you give your soul in exchange for power, it really isn't *you* that has the power. On that point I would remind the visitor of the sketch from the introduction to this title:

¹⁸³ Douglas Adams, *The Hitch-Hiker's Guide to the Galaxy* (New York: Del Rey, 2021).



Phone use today has a sort of Virtual Sorcerer's Bargain.

We may not explicitly tell the devil that he may have our soul if he gives us powers, but it exacts a toll, a toll that is really quite frightening rewiring our brains into tapioca as much as any digital technology yet.¹⁸⁴ When the iPhone 1 hit

¹⁸⁴ Jean-Claude Larchet and Archibald Andrew Torrance, *The New Media Epidemic: The Undermining of Society, Family, and Our Own Soul* (Jordanville, NY: Holy Trinity Publications, The Printshop of St Job of Pochaev, Holy Trinity Monastery, 2019), 24ff.

the scene, phones seemed to place us in “Then,” where we are wielding our phones. But now iPhones and pretty much every competitor are really more in “Now,” with our phones wielding us. They have wrapped us around their little fingers.

If all this is happening, what can we do? Let me give an answer that *might* be helpful, and an answer that *will* be helpful to people who have learned the lesson.

The temperance movement was started at a time when water was (often) unsafe to drink water, and alcoholic drinks were consumed as a primary or near-exclusive beverage by children as well as adults, and under conditions where the historic practice of mostly drinking only hard cider gave way to cheaply available hard liquor. Alcoholism was at an epidemic and the temperance movement was originally an effort to rein in the use of alcohol to show more *temperance*, or moderation, in consumption of alcohol. In later forms, for some very serious reasons, the temperance movement was identified with people pushing for complete abstinence.¹⁸⁵ I mention the temperance movement, knowing that to many the idea of a “Temperance Pledge” has seemed quaint if it refers to something that is recognized at all, and Prohibition daffy, because the temperance movement has left at least one very positive lasting legacy. *Most of us, drinker or non-drinker, hydrate by consuming something non-alcoholic most of the time.* That is a wonderful thing, a tremendous legacy, especially if someone’s beverage of choice is plain ol’ water rather than juice, juice drinks, soft drinks, or energy

¹⁸⁵ “Temperance Movement,” Wikipedia (Wikimedia Foundation, September 9, 2022), https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Temperance_movement.

drinks,¹⁸⁶ and it really is a legacy to be grateful for even among people who find the temperance movement quaint, daffy, or silly. Furthermore, I believe it would be a wonderful thing if something like that would happen with cell phones and our technologies, if people used their phones but do not default to always-on technology use even if they do not default to an always-on alcoholic hydration where the only real question is *which* alcoholic beverage one chooses to hydrate with.

We might follow in some of the steps of the temperance movement, at first trying to back away from always-on technology use as the temperance movement tried to back away from always-on consumption of alcoholic drinks as the first choice for mere hydration. Alcoholism was epidemic, and the American temperance movement appeared at a time when hard cider was consumed “from the crack of dawn to the crack of dawn,” when much stronger drink was more accessible and was consumed readily.¹⁸⁷ Compare today, where we have gone from always-on TV’s to carrying always-on phones. The

¹⁸⁶ I might suggest that drinks that include sugar or corn syrup should be handled like we handle some milder alcoholic drinks: you keep tabs on how many you have had, you stop at one or two most days, and you don’t drink them every day. Also, artificial or “natural” sweeteners are worse than corn syrup. Splenda use correlates with increased obesity and increased weight gain; see, for instance, Dawn Keshishian, “Splenda Contributes to Weight Gain,” DSSurgery, May 13, 2016, <https://www.dssurgery.com/splenda-contributes-weight-gain/>. For more results, see Splenda+use+weight+gain at duckduckgo, accessed September 14, 2022, <https://duckduckgo.com/?q=splenda%2Buse%2Bweight%2Bgain&t=next&atb=v307-1&ia=web>.

¹⁸⁷ “Temperance Movement in the United States,” Wikipedia (Wikimedia Foundation, August 22, 2022), https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Temperance_movement_in_the_United_States.

temperance movement might provide a useful paradigm. Today prohibition is considered by most to be a bad thing, and most people haven't even heard of a "Temperance Pledge." And the temperance movement was ridiculed in its own day: Ambrose Bierce wrote,

Rum, *n.* Generically, fiery liquors which produce madness in total abstainers.¹⁸⁸

Nonetheless, the temperance movement took the U.S. from mostly consuming alcohol most of the time, to mostly consuming non-alcoholic beverages most of the time, and much less alcohol being consumed in the U.S. per person per year today than in the 19th century.¹⁸⁹ That is really nothing to sneeze at, and the Temperance movement's effectiveness in the U.S., starting at a context and a time of heavy over-consumption.

Whether others might follow with a complete abstinence I do not know, though I see it as plausible that some people may say "One lustful viewing of porn is one too many," just as one bite of enchanted Turkish delight is one too many in *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*.¹⁹⁰ "Not Owning a Smartphone" may become a new privilege: the new "Not Owning a Television." I imagine some people might try to rein in their cell phone and technology behaviors to be more temperate, while others may go the

¹⁸⁸ Ambrose Bierce, *The Devil's Dictionary: The Complete Edition* (Richmond, Surrey: Alma Classics, 2019), "Rum."

¹⁸⁹ "History of Alcoholic Drinks," Wikipedia (Wikimedia Foundation, September 19, 2022), https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_alcoholic_drinks.

¹⁹⁰ C. S. Lewis and Pauline Baynes, "Chapter IV: Turkish Delight," in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* (New York, NY: Harper, 2009).

way of emperors and popes, kings and bishops in ages past and practice a complete abstinence, tapering use down gradually or going cold turkey with social supports, perhaps buying a standalone GPS (together with email, my GPS is the one real use I make of my data plan off of my monastery's network, and mobile email use is expendable to me), or even using the trucker's atlas and compass that used to be good enough for us. Donald Knuth, one of the top computer scientists of all time, got rid of his email address. He said, "Email is a wonderful thing for people whose role in life is to be on top of things. But not for me; my role is to be on the bottom of things,"¹⁹¹ I use Facebook and Twitter almost exclusively to post announcements, for a few minutes on a few days. I regard Facebook as treacherous and many of my most toxic interactions have been hosted by Facebook.

However, there is something that reaches much farther than the principled scaling back or stopping use of certain technologies. Backing away from addictive use of technology remains a step, but there is something far bigger known from ancient times and hidden right under our noses. What remains to be done is in St. Isaac the Syrian: "Be peaceful within yourself and Heaven and earth will make peace with you;"¹⁹² and as echoed by St. Seraphim of

¹⁹¹ Donald Knuth, "Email (Let's Drop the Hyphen)," Knuth versus Email, accessed September 23, 2022, <https://www-cs-faculty.stanford.edu/~knuth/email.html>.

¹⁹² St. Isaac the Syrian, *The Ascetical Homilies of St. Isaac the Syrian* (Brooklyn, Holy Transfiguration Monastery, 2011), Homily 2, p. 121. The phrase is heavily cited in Orthodox Tradition, including for instance Elder Thaddeus, *Our Thoughts Determine Our Lives: The Life and Teachings of Elder Thaddeus of Vitronivka* (Platina: St. Herman of Alaska Brotherhood, 2009, 2011), 25; Tito Colliander, *Way of the Ascetics: The Ancient Tradition of Discipline and Inner Growth*

Sarov, “Make peace with yourself and ten thousand around you will be saved.”¹⁹³ Our own decisions, including technology decisions, retain a significant power that all Hell cannot shake.

Our choices matter. Our asceticism matters. Both of these apply to technology as well as other serious arenas. And our greatest interest, our greatest concern now, should be how we are living the short little life we have as mortals on earth, where birth and death are an inch apart, while the ticker tape goes on forever.¹⁹⁴ We choose in this life whether we are to be immortal splendors or immortal horrors forever.

Live vibrantly

Fr. Thomas Hopko’s 55 maxims includes, “52. Focus on God and light, and never on darkness, temptation and sin.”

Rather than make a focus on what you abstain from, make a focus of what you engage in. This is at its very hardest at the first, but you can take up a hobby. Again, see my hobby recommendation engine at <https://cjshayward.com/hobby/>.¹⁹⁵ Take time to engage with classic books. Search ideas for staycations. Explore the great outdoors. Take a human interest class at your local community college or park district. Visit a monastery. Volunteer or show kindness to a beggar. I haven’t read *101*

(Crestwood: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press 1998), 8.

¹⁹³ Contributors to Wikimedia projects, “Seraphim of Sarov,” Wikiquote (Wikimedia Foundation, Inc., July 27, 2022), https://en.wikiquote.org/wiki/Seraphim_of_Sarov.

¹⁹⁴ Velimirović Nikolaj, *Prayers by the Lake*, 2018, 48.

¹⁹⁵ C.J.S. Hayward, “Help Me Find a Hobby!,” CJS Hayward, November 6, 2019, <https://cjshayward.com/hobby/>.

Creative Dates,¹⁹⁶ but I would be awfully surprised if I were to read it and find it only had valuable information specifically for romantic engagement. Most of all, engage with God. Don't make your activity be about a replacement for technologies you limit or abstain from. Instead, make your limiting or abstaining from technologies be about how you are living a fuller life than trawling clickbait.

It is my own experience that how interesting my computer seems to me depends on whether I am using it for something constructive, and seeking to produce something, something that will benefit others, or whether I am seeking only to consume. This goes for my writing, art, or programming; the question is not what skillset I am using, but whether I am giving or trying to get.

If a journey of ten thousand miles begins with a single step, one sensible first step might be to try and improve some of your decisions with your phone.

Would you take one step, *today*?

¹⁹⁶ *101 Creative Dates: Ideas, Tips, and Personal Experiences from the Life of a Hopeless Romantic*, accessed September 26, 2022, <https://www.amazon.com/dp/B079K5YC3Y>.