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PHIL 182

4 December 2024

My Phone Is a Parasite and It Is All My Fault!

The relationship between humans and phones has grown into one more intimate than we really understand. Our innate ability to differentiate our phone's vibrations and what they signal, either the quick buzz revealing a kind text from your mother, or the long vibration murmuring that your great-grandmother sent you a GIF, advances the standards of communication to one unfamiliar to human-to-human relationships. Phones anthropomorphically crave attention with their incessant notifications and chimes; as soon as eyes lock onto our phones we are lured in and trapped. They exploit the 'free time' remaining in our busy lives and drag our decaying minds into a digital world leaving only our shoelaces on the pavement. Our phones and possessions have begun to possess us.

Humans have augmented society in a way that situates the phone as a necessary item, obliterating our ability to complete activities and tasks efficiently without one. We aren't required to utilize a phone for many of the functions it provides, like photography or audio recording, but they are the *forefront* device for communication, navigation, photography, connections... anything and everything; so much so, that the phone is now the fifth limb of the homosapien. Archaeologist Lambros Malafouris, in his text *Is it 'me,' or is it 'mine'? The Mycenaean sword as a body-part*, identifies a relationship synonymous to ours with phones: the Mycenaean people and their swords. They were inseparable. As determinants of status, role, and identity, and simply artifacts carried around naturally by these ancient peoples, the sword

blended in with their fingers and hands. The sword's significance to the people granted it the faculty to "change and shape [their] bodies by transforming and extending the boundaries of [their] *body schema*," the body schema being the mind's perception of the body it controls (Malafouris 115). The person-to-possession relationship they once had seemingly vanished, the sword developing into an extension of themselves, part of themselves and their daily functions. Although we do not literally need our phones to survive, our society has been molded into one only accessible by phone and technology. We can't keep up with the world unless we live through our phones.

Our relentless employment of the phone to navigate through life itself has positioned us in a state of perpetual accessibility. We are eternally linked to the entire world through our new "body schema," and the world as a whole is linked directly back to us (Malafouris 115). Jonathan Crary singles out and analyzes this 'eternal accessibility' in his text *24/7: Late Capitalism and the Ends of Sleep*, noting how our reliance on and vicarious living through technology has resulted in detrimental effects on sleep and general human health. The blue light emitted from phones convinces the brain that it is the day when it is the night. The videos we watch before bed stimulate our brains, making it even more difficult to escape the phone and silence our screaming brains. Phones are specifically programmed to show no "absence of restraints on consuming," with unabating advertisements from content creators and brands (Crary 10). Even the boundary between our sleep and social worlds has been broken as push notifications break through our requests to 'not be disturbed,' waking us up in the night. Our bodies have been forced to "assimilate an ever-expanding surfeit of services, images, procedures..." that we are unable to keep up with unless it feeds into our time to rest (Crary 10). When our final time of peace has been invaded, it will certainly result in negative effects on our quality of sleep and health. The

“boundary between humans and nonhumans... has been canceled,” leading our work, social, and personal lives to collide. (Malafouris 118). Our digital and physical presences clash, twist, and struggle until one forfeits and disappears.

The longer our mechanical fifth limb preys upon us, it blossoms into more than an extension of our body, but our minds as well. The phone becomes a permanent filter, altering our perceptions of reality in front of us. We live through our phones, customizing our home screens, the applications we download, phone cases, and screen protectors; we reproduce our brains into a digital one. We take photos of moments we wish to remember, immediately relinquishing any truth from the moment by taking the photo, leaving only the phone’s perception. We post on social media to create a tangible and ideal persona for ourselves, supposedly, but truly an indefinitely growing community of family, friends, colleagues, and weirdos. Content similar to what we engage with is summoned to our phones, matching and mimicking our behavior. TikTok and platforms similar to it showcase meaningless and time-consuming content that does nothing more than satisfy an urge for quick pleasure, often referred to as ‘brain-rot.’ The longer we are plastered to our phones, the more difficult it becomes to escape our cravings. At their core, phones are simply miniature billboards, televisions, and newspapers algorithmically individualized for the person they mean to possess. We are addicted to the digital world and will let it exploit us until our neurons melt into 01100011 01101111 01100100 01100101. Eventually, the relationship we have, originally formed to endure and survive in an expeditious world, develops into an addiction and love far too intimate for a human and a combination of metals. Our time is abused parasitically by phones to suck us into a world oriented towards consumption and wealth. We unknowingly deposit ourselves more and more into the digital world, and if we continue to use our phones to pave our way through this ‘life,’ our humanity will never return.

This commodity, turned into a fifth limb, to a new brain, to a new self entirely, while an essential item in our society, is killing us. No other item in the world has accomplished feats as colossal as the phone, in terms of degrading humans' ability to sleep, converse, connect, think, and live on their own. Rather than functioning as a buttress to humanity, uplifting, supporting, and providing a stable culture for us, we are the replaceable, concrete pillars of a technology-driven world. Unfortunately, humans constructed and subscribed to this lifestyle long ago, deeming it essentially inescapable. Our contributions to the digital world are the only reason it continues to grow, continuing to extract our life and turn it into a combination of miniature RGB panels and data. Our limelighting of phones as a status symbol or determinant of our relationships with others is our downfall. Friendships are defined through Instagram posts and the idea that any real human connection can exist between conversations sculpted into blue and grey ovals is a facade. We are robbed of the opportunity to engage in real human connections. Rather than gaining a fluency in phone vibrations, we must relearn how to communicate and empathize with those around us without a digital guide. Our phones have forever altered the way we live our lives, regrettably, annihilating any ounce of *life* we have left.

Works Cited

Crary, Jonathan. *24/7: Late Capitalism and the Ends of Sleep*. Verso Books, 2014.

Malafouris, Lambros. *Is it 'me' or is it 'mine'? The Mycenaean sword as a body-part*. Oxbow Books, 2008.