

## K. Industrialism and Anti-Industrialism

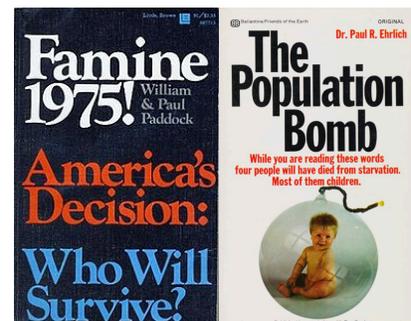
1. Because of the obvious life-giving benefits of technology, most people automatically gravitate to new technologies and adopt them as a part of their lives. Few give any thought to whether or not take a certain vaccine, install the latest device, give their personal details to huge technology companies, or check the ingredients on the label of a packaged food item.
2. This generally positive predisposition to technology is part of a kind of social contract that can be called “industrialism.” Industrialism is the collective commitment to make use of industrial technology as part of our social system.
3. It must be said that for many people industrialism is an unthinking process. Like much of the social contract, it just seems to be “the way things are.” For those that have a more active and critical mindset, however, the costs and drawbacks associated with each step of technological progress have generated anti-industrial perspectives and responses.
4. The first of these, historically, is known as *Luddism* (possibly named after a man called Ned Ludd). The Luddites, **c.1811**, responded negatively to the rise of the factory system because they saw the mechanization of labor as dehumanizing. Compared to the comfort and intimacy of “cottage industry,” the huge new factories were loud, dirty, dangerous, and provided only the most repetitious, almost robotic kinds of work. The response of the Luddites was to rebel, and destroy the factories. Although the movement did not last, the perspective involved certainly did.



The stark contrast between the quaint and intimate life of craft making in pre-industrial times and the mechanical setting of industrial factories motivated the *Luddites* to reject industrialization as dehumanizing.

5. The next form of rejecting industrialization is known as *transcendentalism*. As the word suggests, it means to want to “transcend,” or go beyond—in this case: to go beyond the material focus of industrial technology. Transcendentalists looked at the accelerating worlds of trains and telegraphs, factories and business, and decided that it too was dehumanizing, at least in the sense that it overemphasized the material dimension of human life. One famous transcendentalist, Henry David Thoreau, walked away from it all in **1854**. He went to live in the woods, built himself a small cabin, and communed with nature. Although the transcendentalists, like the Luddites, did not derail industrialization, they did impact many people. Anyone that goes to church, goes hiking in nature, enjoys yoga or meditation, or listens to music or poetry to relax and get away from the “rat race” is practicing some form of transcendentalism.
6. Before the advent of the advanced industrial period, two related responses to industrialism also arose out of concern for the impact of industrial technology on the resources we need, such as trees and water and oil. One view, called *conservationism*,

- says we need to refrain from using too many resources, because we need to *conserve* them for future generations. Another view, called *preservationism*, says we need to preserve nature in its pristine, untouched state, because nature is a value in and of itself.
7. One of the notable outcomes of the combined efforts of *conservationists* and *preservationists* has been the creation of national parks in order to prioritize safeguarding the resources in them. This is largely because of the efforts of president Theodore Roosevelt, a noted conservationist, and founder of the Boone & Crocket Club in **1887** and John Muir, a noted preservationist, and founder of the Sierra Club in **1892**.
  8. Despite the criticisms of, and reactions against, industrialism, the benefits of adopting technology have proved the overriding factor for the vast majority of people, and therefore industrialism continues to be a part of our social contract.
  9. In the advanced industrial era, this has caused a more determined form of anti-industrialism to arise known as *environmentalism*, which sometimes becomes *environmental alarmism*.
  10. Environmentalism is a response to the obvious fact that the kinds of technologies we now possess, such as atomic power (including atomic weapons) and chemical agriculture (using pesticides, insecticides, herbicides, and other chemicals in vast quantities), can have an impact on the “environment” (in this sense: the natural world that surrounds us) on a scale never before witnessed.
  11. Environmentalism, in its best forms, challenges us to address that impact, such as by helping us to see the unintended consequences of our use of technology, whether those are pollution or other undesirably impacts on the environment.
  12. One famous early environmentalist, for instance, named Rachel Carson, noticed that the widespread use of chemicals in agriculture led to the dying off of many insects—generally viewed as a good thing by itself—especially mosquitoes—but that this also could also harm bird populations (which normally eat those bugs!). Her book *Silent Spring*, written in **1962** is considered an important trigger for the rise of the modern environmental movement.
  13. *Alarmism* often dominates environmentalism, unfortunately. In the 1960s, many experts predicted that the number of people would quickly grow and cause widespread food shortages. One book called this growth the “population bomb,” and such “experts” spoke of having to see dying millions around us within a decade because we couldn’t possibly grow enough food. The *Green Revolution* completely nullified this apocalyptic prediction.
  14. In the same vein, many people are concerned that if the use of technology is contributing to “climate change,” the effects will be catastrophic. Alarmists insist there is nothing we can do except renounce our use of life-giving technology, or we face irreversible calamitous outcomes that will be our fault. Whether there is warming or not, does the history of human innovation—from steam powered trains to walking on the moon—from the first vaccine to the transplanting of human hearts—from the telegraph to the Internet—really support such a dire prediction? So far, all the predictions of alarmists have not come true. The history of technology is the story of the amazing human ability to *solve problems and create the values they need in order to flourish on Earth*.
  15. The completed timeline on the next page captures all the major milestone we have studied.



Alarmists have an exaggerated negative view of history, and make wild predictions about how the world is going to end!

