

K. Industrialism and Anti-Industrialism

1. Because of the obvious life-giving benefits of technology, most people automatically accept new technologies as part of life.
2. This generally positive attitude to technology is part of a kind of social contract that can be called “industrialism.” Industrialism is the general agreement to make use of industrial technology as part of our lives.
3. Even though there has always been a general agreement about it, there has also been anti-industrial criticism of technology for different reasons.
4. The first of these criticisms is known as *Luddism*. The Luddites, **c.1811**, responded negatively to the rise of the factory system because they saw the mechanization of labor as dehumanizing. 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.
6. One famous transcendentalist, Henry David Thoreau, walked away from industrial society in **1854**. He went to live in the woods, built himself a small cabin, and communed with nature. 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.
7. 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 avoid 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.
8. 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**.

9. In the advanced industrial era, there has been a new kind of anti-industrialism called *environmentalism*, which sometimes becomes *environmental alarmism*.
10. Environmentalism points out that powerful technologies like nuclear weapons and chemicals can have an impact on the “environment” (the natural world that surrounds us) on a scale never before witnessed.
11. Environmentalism can help us to see the unintended consequences of our use of technology, like pollution, and decided what to do about them.
12. One famous early environmentalist, for instance, named Rachel Carson, noticed that the widespread use of chemicals in agriculture was killing lots of mosquitoes, which is what people wanted, but that it was also hurting birds (which normally eat those bugs!). Her book *Silent Spring*, written in **1962** is considered the start 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. This very negative prediction did not come true. The ***Green Revolution*** completely canceled this 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 give up our life-giving technologies, or everything will be ruined. So far, all the predictions of alarmists have not come true.
15. The completed timeline on the next page captures all the major milestone we have studied.

