

The Anarchist Library (Mirror)

Anti-Copyright



Anonymous

The Attack on Our Senses

Autumn 2020

Translated for The Local Kids, Issue 6

Previously appeared as *Der Angriff auf unsere Sinne* in *In Der Tat*
(*Anarchistische Zeitschrift*), Issue 8, Summer 2020

usa.anarchistlibraries.net

The Attack on Our Senses

Anonymous

Autumn 2020

One of the effects of the technology project is the reduction of experience and along with it, experiencing the world together is becoming an increasingly rare phenomenon. Fear increases in isolation, perceptions shift and trust in one's own ability to shape one's own environment dwindles - unless we relearn the art of experiencing ...

Our perception of the environment is becoming increasingly deprived through the use of technological tools. This means that we are placed in a state of isolation that replaces our natural perception with that which domination provides us. Interpersonal communication, information and emotional affection are regulated by various devices and continuously integrated within capitalist systems. Deprivation is a means of torture in which the tormentor completely shields the victim from external stimuli and thus deprives him of the necessary sensory impressions; seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting and touching. Sensory deprivation is one of the methods of white torture, meaning it is often difficult to detect and verify, yet it has harmful to destructive effects on the psyche and body of the victim. But since a person's brain is dependent on constant stimulation even in a deprived environment and cannot do

without it, it creates hallucinations and the consciousness changes. At the same time the nerve cells that are not used begin to wither. Altering, aligning or trying to deteriorate our senses is a fundamental intervention in the being of a person since they are responsible for how we perceive reality.

The interaction of the senses forms our experience in this world, which exists as a practical (and implicit) understanding and is attached to our actions and movements. For example, when playing the piano, hearing is linked to the keys. Our body learns to play a certain key combination which seems to come automatically from our fingers and with which we are able to fade out the individual details. Another example would be when a blind person uses a cane to fill in their vision. He absorbs the cane, attention to the use of the equipment fades into the background and the person is able to concentrate on other things. This process connects the sensual, the physical and the habit to enable an action. A negative increase in this is referred to in psychology as “Entsinnung” [detachment from meaning]. It is the process in which experience of the world gets lost. For example, a hiker does not climb the mountain but takes the cable car. In this example, the resistance that the hiker has to overcome in order to bring his body to the limits of his perception is lost. He gets to the top of the mountain without having experienced the ascent. And this is exactly where the crux of our current behaviour in the technologically advanced world lies: one uses the microwave instead of the fire without knowing how the equipment works. You simply press the button or not even that, but leave it to voice commands or, in the future, to commands through eye movements, for example. Instead of wandering, people take the carriage, the steam locomotive, the electric locomotive, the plane, the magnetic levitation train to get around - and bodily activity is always lost, as is the knowledge about the functionality of the products that we use all the time. Confidence in acting according to one's own personal observations and judging information for oneself is also lost and is replaced by confidence in a scientific and techno-

logical authority. Your own sensory impressions are no longer the instruments to find your way in this world. The resistances in such a way of life disappear, the experience of reality is lacking and at the same time the activity is reduced. The friction becomes almost imperceptible with a push of a button, a mouse click or a swipe on the screen. They appear so simple and convenient and do not expose us to any significant resistances that we have to overcome, but rather diminish our sense of touch by only using it for a swipe on a smooth surface. And I certainly do not exclude ourselves as anarchists from this degradation of knowledge based on experience. For example, if we feed a translation AI to make our translation projects more efficient and thus want to achieve faster results. Or even if we watch riot video after riot video, collect tons of information in front of the screen and evaluate it and compare it with other countless Twitter sources in order to create a picture of an event that we did not attend or in which we did not actually take part.

The floods of images to which we are exposed are not attached to any physical equivalent, but still leave impressions that are inscribed in our bodies. We become screen addicts who yearn for the next spectacular expropriation videos which are far from letting our adrenaline levels get as high as what we experience with even the most unspectacular pasting of posters in the streets. What happens nevertheless is that these images expel our actual memories and replace them with enactments or a spectacle. It turns us into fillable vessels who are open to the supply of commercial software and who adapt more and more to the passive life of a screen puppet. It also happens that simply sitting in front of the screen, for example, a person's visual spectrum is reduced. The eyes adjust to staring from the same distance at moving lights, they move only minimally and look at the restricted area of the screen. The head remains rigid, which would otherwise not be the case, because outside of this reduced scope we are used to constantly orient ourselves towards proximity, distance, movement and natural light

sources. Nevertheless, it must be said that our perspective is narrowed even beyond the screen, because - to name just one example - the light that surrounds us in cities is becoming more and more artificial, meaning technologically regulated. Lanterns illuminate the streets for us, regulate our sleep rhythm, control what we will see, where we will walk on the streets and in parks, and our body adapts to this restricted visual behaviour. We mostly bypass with flash-lights our abilities to see without lights and to trust our steps. Without a light source it takes a while before you can see in the dark. It is really difficult to find places that are not somehow illuminated. Even when we are standing on a mountain we are often in a glow of city lights that obscures the stars or in a system of so-called Smart City Lighting which offers the technological lighting solutions for the energy efficiency of a city.

Virtual Reality creates a further level of enactment through media by merging the physical with the electronically produced appearance. Here also the viewer receives the illusion of an action without acting. And completely by accident, we take the predefined paths of domination without encountering eventualities or inducing the unexpected. We find ourselves in a monotonous walk in an artificially created reality with various options like in a video game. Or we will even find ourselves faced with an upgrade, in which algorithms will create our own singular reality, that will be created for our little bubble - the Augmented Reality. One could argue here that it is also possible in VR or AR to take on the role of a hacker by changing the source code, meaning creating creative solutions or changes that break down limits. Or that it is possible that a prescribed technical product can also be used in other ways, such as the Bonnot gang's use of cars to expropriate banks. That's true. Nonetheless, progressive environmental destruction, shitty working conditions, etc. must always be expected in order to produce these products. So it is a thing between means and ends. And to come back to the subject of torture: the sensory impressions that reach us in a world of VR are hallucinations that domination pro-

vides us. While all undesirable sensory impressions are eliminated, those permissible have been analysed and rearranged for us for years by the (advertising) industry and the field of neuromarketing; their sound and food designers, their psychologists and doctors. For example, sound designers are working on building razors in such a way that they sound particularly powerful and robust, while epilators for a female clientele are gentler. Or chips and cornflakes that are mixed with substances that create a crispy crack in the mouth or car door noises that companies can patent. The list can be infinitely expanded with everyday objects, right down to scent marketing. Visual, acoustic or tactile signals are first processed in the cerebral cortex of the brain, while scents have a direct effect on the limbic system, where emotions are processed and urges are guided. Events that are linked to strong emotions are much more likely to linger in our memory, and we find it difficult to evade this orchestrated influence.

Therefore, our concepts of life in this world are not a matter of taste, meaning that we can simply choose an alternative from a range of choices. Because the interpersonal dimension is lost without the action that creates the meaning of social interaction. The other becomes a projection surface and a product of a presentation which leads to a loss of empathy and also prevents us from recognizing our comrades and building affinity. The loss of shared experiences, of causing trouble and destruction together makes people insecure. Those who do not make their own experiences also lose confidence in their own intuitive abilities, necessary persistence and tolerance towards frustration. While these are necessary to carry out an action. They lose themselves in the increasing dependence on guides, statistics and devices that try to create a knowledge that you don't have to acquire yourself through experiences. Therefore, it is absolutely necessary to relearn the art of experiencing in order to live and fight creatively, while breaking norms and going beyond borders.