The Terrors of the Internet

The topic of the internet is one that has been debated ever since its creation. Today, cybernetics has soaked into the fabric of society. Like oil on a cotton shirt, it will never fully remove itself. Since is so engrained in our culture, people are blinded by its functionality and do not seek to see beneath to its binds. Cybernetics transcends control and therefore creates terrorism and rebellion. Not all people realize it, but those who do stick out like a sore thumb.

In the modern world, there are many examples of the issues the internet inherently has. Although the internet is supposed to make things easier and give us freedom, it ends up taking control. A dubstep group by the name of Arion explicitly lyricizes what they truly think of the internet in a song called “Internet Rebellion (Fuck S.O.P.A).” With a mix of spoken word, rapping, and passion, this disk jockey lays down the law. S.O.P.A, which is an acronym for the “Stop Online Piracy Act,” is one of the things Arion feels like is taking part in controlling him. In a section of his song he says, “It’s like we’ve worked for two entire decades/ Developing something that gives each of us/ The ability and access to express ourselves as individuals/ What happened to our freedom?/ It seems that this is yet another force field of the government has inflected upon us to enable more control” (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fKokUbSgJUE). This feeling of rebellion and anger towards the system is one of the consequences of total “cybernetization.” Although the artist here may hate what the internet has done and what it stands for, he also realizes the practicality innately in it. The internet is needed for so many things, such as communication and
knowledge. And since almost the entire population of the world turns to technology to understand foreign subjects, talk with one another, and a multitude of other tasks – it is near impossible to forgo its usage. This double negative is frustrating for those who feel this way. This frustration can only build upon itself and one day explode. This explosion of feeling is where the rebellion stems from. Arion also notes, “The internet was created to make lives easier, not harder/ The internet was developed to break our limits, not create them.” Here, the DJ lists all the things the internet is supposed to do, such as expand our boundaries and help us out. Yet he negates this by saying that this is what the internet is supposed to do, but does not. In our generation, we have grown up with the internet affecting our minds since day one. “Internet Rebellion” is just a small sample of the many that do not want to be controlled.

One infamous example of an individual who could not stand to be controlled is Ted Kaczynski, the “Unabomber.” Kaczynski was a mathematics prodigy that formerly taught at the University of California at Berkeley in the late 1960’s. 1978 was not only the year Ted got fired from his job and lost his girlfriend, but it was also the year he made his first bomb. He sent it, via letter, to a professor at Northwestern University. Luckily it was opened by a campus security officer who only received small injuries when the bomb exploded. He then sent two bombs to the American Airlines headquarters in 1979 and 1980. From these multiple attacks, the then mysterious, unknown attacker was nicknamed “The Unabomber” after the University and Airline Bombings. Why would a once professor suddenly have reason to terrorize? The answer is simple: the internet.

In an article by Brian Holmes called Filming the World Laboratory: Cybernetic History in Das Netz, the madman’s motivations are discussed. Just as terrorism arose from cybernetics, so
did Kaczynski. In 1958, he was among a group of Harvard students who were subject to a series of damaging psychological tests. This series of tests, created by Henry Murray, was given to the students over the course of a year. It was designed to examine the “effects of extreme psychological stress in order to improve screening” (http://foundation.arts.ucsb.edu/~art7d/w15/Gingold/reader/Filming%20the%20World%20Laboratory%20-%20Continental%20Drift.pdf). In the midst of this laboratory experiment was Kaczynski’s ontology unfolding. The nature of his being was being challenged and inherently he wanted to rebel against the control of the tests. The article says that the director of the movie Das Netz (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fHxRuLT4FIE) deemed Ted Kaczynski an undesirable side effect of the psychosocial engineering; a distorted outcome. The way the Unabomber turned out can be drawn from the unforeseen consequences of the testing. A passage from his manifesto says, “When I wrote that the concept of a “utopia” is crazy and dangerous, I didn’t mean that all utopias are crazy and dangerous, but rather the utopia that makes possible the creation of a society according to a specific, ideal design. You yourself, I am sure, will have your own idea of utopia. Someone else will have a different idea, which may diverge considerably from yours. How would you like it if he forced his utopia on you? Do you have the right to force your utopia on him?” You can read his full manifesto here http://cyber.eserver.org/unabom.txt. His rejection of the technoscientific utopia is based upon control. He thinks that to live in a virtual world where machines were more knowledgeable than men is extremely undesirable. His manifesto asks the reader if they feel the same way and tries to convince them that this “utopia” is not the correct way of living. Kaczynski retreated from all notions of control and made his own cabin in the middle of the woods. It wasn’t only a cabin, it
was a workshop between the trees. This act is similar to the transcendentalist writer, Henry David Thoreau.

In the year 1854, Thoreau lived for two months, two years, and two days in a cabin he built near Walden Pond in Concord, Massachusetts. The work he wrote from this time is a reflection upon simple living in the wilderness. However, the book is also a declaration of independence and a rebellious statement against societal norms placed by the government. Through total immersion in nature, Thoreau tried to understand society through an objective lens. The writer never fully accepted society and always had an air of rebellion. You can see this in one of his most famous quotes, “... I did not wish to live what was not life, living is so dear; nor did I wish to practice resignation, unless it was quite necessary. I wanted to live deep and suck out all the marrow of life, to live so sturdily and Spartan-like as to put to rout all that was not life, to cut a broad swath and shave close, to drive life into a corner, and reduce it to its lowest terms...” (Henry David Thoreau, 1854). He did not want to blend in with the others and go along living domestically. He craved to live life unlike how others lived. This act of rebellion against the way most people live life is what makes Thoreau stand out as one of the famous individuals who could not stand to be controlled.

It all boils down to control. People don’t want to be controlled or taken advantage in any way. This is why people like Ted Kaczynski, Henry David Thoreau, or Arion have rebelled. The internet doesn’t at first seem harmful because of its sheer functionality and popularity. But once one pulls back the curtains of technology, they can see it for what it essentially is – an extension of control. Whether it is from the government controlling what you
are able to post or download, or from social media sights conducting experiments on you. It only makes sense that one might rebel against this.