

Active Disconnection: Self-Reflection on Non-Use of Information and Communication Technologies

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How to cite this paper: Yao, R. (2023). Active Disconnection: Self-Reflection on Non-Use of Information and Communication Technologies. *Advances in Journalism and Communication*, 11, 26-49.

<https://doi.org/10.4236/ajc.2023.111003>

Received: January 9, 2023

Accepted: March 20, 2023

Published: March 23, 2023

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Abstract

“Disconnection” has become the new normal of Internet connectivity culture. The article traces the “anti-technology” of thought in the process of oral communication, text communication, print communication, electronic communication, and internet communication. This study analyzes the discussion content of Western disconnectors on the foreign platform “Reddit” and explores the user’s understanding of this behavior. This study rethinks significantly these behaviors that seem to be “anti-technology.” Disconnection, as a result, for those who actively disconnect, is another connected way of life, active pursuit of self, resistance to media and capital power, and a new reflection on the relationship between people and technology. The purpose of “disconnection” is to accomplish the subjectivity of humans and promote the healthy development of the relationship between humans and technology.

Keywords

Active Disconnection, “Right to Disconnect”, “Anti-Technology”, Human and Technology

1. Introduction

In January 2017, the reform of the French labor law passed the “right to disconnect (Von Bergen & Bressler, 2019)”. It came into effect that employees can disconnect from work during non-working time and avoid engaging in work-related electronic communication. When sent information, employees have the right to protect personal space through “I read it but do not reply”. Subsequently, some countries, such as Italy and Spain, regard the “right to disconnect (Lerouge & Trujillo Pons, 2022)” as a legal right, and many companies also in-

itiatively take disconnection practices.

More importantly, this right is still valid for telecommuting at home in France, which means employees still have the right to turn off mobile phones and computers during regular hours.

Above all, the right to disconnect in the legal sense refers to the right of employees to disconnect from electronic equipment and work information on electronic equipment, which is the protection of the private domain. In essence, employees no longer work under traditional employment conditions. “Permanent online” in the Internet age has been legally recognized.

“The connection of everything” is the basic feature of the internet and has also become the core of digital culture. “Permanent connection” breaks the limitations of time and space and reconstructs social order and the human. The internet seems to have fulfilled its beautiful prophecy that it can change the world. Internet thinking has become the norm in guild human activities. In the popular internet environment, we must consider whether counter-trend? However, more and more countries have begun to incorporate “disconnection rights” into their laws, and the word “disconnection” has begun to appear frequently to show that it reflects unique characteristics and trends on the Internet.

I question what exactly disconnection is and why this behavior happens. It is the most basic behavior like eating and sleeping. However, taking it as a legal right means it has become an allowed behavior by power. Hence, should it be raised to the legal level? More importantly, the production of the right to disconnect discloses the limit of our current culture of connectivity. To some degree, some scholars think dysconnectivity, particularly the right of disconnect, is a structuring paradox because disconnect means the fact that connectivity is a strong and impregnable power. As [Van Dijck \(2013\)](#) ironically writes: “Opting out of connective media is hardly an option.”

How to understand the “disconnect” rationally, perhaps these people taking this behavior will bring different answers. This paper aims at their real experience about disconnection, such as leaving influential media platforms, having an endeavor to rethink the relationship between humans and technology in the era of the internet.

2. Literature Review

[Light \(2014\)](#) first clarified the concept of “disconnection” in book named “Disconnecting with Social Networking Sites”. Firstly, disconnection is a verb referring to the removal or destruction of connection; secondly, it is a state of being that keeps being maintained and created by disconnection. Disconnection includes the following constitutions: use or not use a particular SNS; disconnect within a particular SNS, such as closing the circle of friends, delaying reply, refusing to locate, avoiding Disturbing, muting; stop connecting multiple SNSs, such as refusing to share to Twitter and turning off SNS or phone in a special public place. Usually, scholars mainly focus on these human behaviors rather

than non-humans, such as the computer and network signals. Disconnection isn't a new phenomenon since artificial technology occurred. Importantly, it already existed at the beginning of the internet (Bauer, 1995).

Some scholars have also noticed this “abnormal” situation in the connected society. The practice of disconnection is not accidental, but it will inevitably appear with the development of Internet technology. Individuals have a motive for disconnection in a space-time situation, whether it is a temporary or permanent disconnection, including universal such as politics, economy, population, culture, and religion, and some people use social media disconnection to express their ideology (Karppi, 2011), called “digital detox” to express themselves Resistance to social media and the internet (Syvertsen, 2017).

The appearance of disconnection is related to the environment of the whole era. Big data allows individuals to use social media to express themselves and enjoy convenience, but it means a decentralized panoramic prison. Their behavioral habits are monitored by data for the production of capital and the implementation of power. They are supervised by capital and power, even acquaintances and strangers in a “common view environment” (Baruh & Popescu, 2017). Blurring the boundaries between public and private life, undermining the connection with friends, and losing concentration are common reasons. It is a paradox to connect. People connect with everyone on social media but ignore their relationship with their closest people and can't find a friend who can talk to them (Woodstock, 2014). In addition, information overload, fragmented information, and fake information are causing users to be tired (Morrison & Gomez, 2014). The perfect life of the “front desk” brings individual anxiety. Moreover, in my research, I find that meaningless connections make individuals spend their time on the Internet daily, but they are losing the most basic perception and ability to solve real-world problems. Under such a premise, it seems a wise choice for individuals to choose to disconnect.

In addition, the social media and internet technologies that bring about these problems are doing something, and the “availability” of the technology also provides an environment for disconnection practice (Dremljuga, 2017). The diversity of social media itself, the settings of controllable switches (one click to turn off personalized algorithm recommendation), and particular screen time limiting softwares all allow individuals to disconnect.

Disconnection practice can be divided into passive and active, voluntary and involuntary. For users, passive and involuntary disconnections are generally due to national political or other reasons. For example, countries such as Iran, for national security, will use the network's disconnection to control the people's behavior rather than soliciting the will. It is difficult for the public to speak on the platform. In general, the behavior of users is active, active, and voluntary. Scholars almost agree: disconnection is not the opposite of connection but a situational choice. Individuals make choices based on personal needs, or work needs to balance real life and online life with a certain degree of initiative (Bossio

& Holton, 2021). Disconnection is not necessarily harmful. As Wright said, disconnection is for a better connection, and intermittent and alternating disconnection give different meanings and experiences to connecting again.

Experts' opinions are essential. They are the observers and leaders of Internet life. However, the most critical thing should belong to users. Internet technology is constantly urging us to get involved and continue to accelerate and sprint towards the Garden of Eden. However, is everyone in it really willing to be involved in it and keen on the beautiful myth of the Garden of Eden? Will they think and respond to "everything is connected"? In previous research, we can see that "disconnection" happens to users everywhere, and users are indeed thinking and taking action. Although there will be various stumblings in the process of disconnection, there will be many limitations, and many opportunities will be lost, but they still choose to continue. Digital Sabbaths, digital suicides, and regular unplugging have become ways of disconnecting activists in the internet age.

Unlike previous researchers who understand the active and passive non-participation give various analyses from their professional views (Andersson, 2016), the article will explore the users' understanding of their active disconnections.

3. Anti-Technology

Is disconnection an exclusive term or a brand phenomenon for the internet age? Disconnection essentially reflects the relationship between humans and communication technology. Since the birth of communication technology, people have always loved and hated it. It is not surprising that technology implementation has engendered extreme sentiments, both pro and contra (Berbekar, 1988). Some people have constantly been examining and speculating on the relationship between humans and communication technology, keeping a distance from it. There are constant voices of doubt about it, and anti-technology has also become the primary trend.

Especially, the debate about communication technology is about to what extent do people perceive that the new technologies will be generally affordable and of benefit to all parts of society (Reese et al., 1986)? Anti-technology focuses on some risks about technology. Some people thought computers were dehumanizing people and making them overly dependent (Lee, 1970), some scenarists thought new technology is the tool for domination and hegemony of exiting power elites (Herbert, 1981). Some anti-technologists thought ICT has also greatly facilitated cultural invasions, resulting in real or imagined resentments and revulsions, which were one of the causes of international terrorism (Mishra, 2003). Some studies showed public might be anti-technology supports who had low education and low income level (Reese et al., 1986). Anti-technology is a common phenomenon. So, in this part, I will track some events and behavior as the evidence to anti-technology. Perhaps we can think more deeply about the relationship between humans and technology through the change in anti-

technological thinking.

3.1. Oral Communication and Writing Technology

For thousands of years, people have carefully observed the relationship between technology and human beings, especially their thoughts and behaviors. As the first philosopher in the West, Socrates turned his philosophical research from nature to man, paying attention to people's minds, morality, and knowledge. He was also the first to consider whether tools would change people's thoughts and behaviors. Socrates is the most eloquent defender of oral culture, and he only spread his views orally and most of his thoughts were written by Plato. Socrates has the most substantial doubts about the culture of words. In his view, spoken language was a "living language" which has vitality and can be guided to achieve truth, goodness, and beauty. He guided students' thinking and cognition through questioning and dialogue, while written words were lifeless and had no Vitality. Written words could easily make people think that was the truth and mistakenly think they understand the whole world. The words on the surface seemed full of wisdom and could tell you much wisdom, but they can only tell you the answer set in stone. Writing means that there are not so many things we need to remember. Writing will damage the individual's memory and affect the internalization of knowledge. In addition, Socrates is more afraid of words that make language out of control. The reason is that anyone can accept words but cannot distinguish between right and wrong, and when words or ideas are abused, the writer cannot explain them. Socrates believes that ideas and knowledge can be corrected and disseminated through debate and communication, and truth can be obtained through criticism in debate. He worries that words are fixed as long as they are produced, and it is difficult to change and challenging to obtain truth through communication.

According the history, in Socrates' life, ancient Greece was still dominated by oral culture, and most ideas were generated from debates. The famous ideas of lecturers Demosthenes and Aristotle were all derived from debates. The writing was only an auxiliary function for the ancient Greeks at that time. These lecturers did not focus on preservation but on the process of generating ideas. Socrates did not try actual writing, nor did he experience the changes in people's minds brought about by systematic reading, like the author explained his views in the book and the readers communicated with the author, thus forming a review of the truth.

Plato's view of writing culture has changed. Plato paid attention to the writing and thought that words could point to the highest realm beyond words. He paid attention to not only the writing culture but also all the eminent masters and popular media technologies of his time, such as criticizes, poetry, wisdom, rhetoric, argumentation, governance, and soul-orientation.

Plato adhered to the belief of Socrates that idea was obtained through debate, like the dialogue body, but it was expressed in words, which seemed contradic-

tory. It reflected Plato's thinking on the writing culture. In Athens in the 5th century BC, writing technology was revived. The revived written culture challenged and crushed the oral culture of the Athenian Golden Age. How to defend Homeric oral culture and performance culture? With the revival of writing technology via the spiritual power of the intellectual movement, many people used writing to the extreme, and rhetoric flourishes became a necessary stage of human spiritual evolution. However, Plato was not obsessed with the bright future of writing culture. In his view, writing culture was a form of memory that had decayed. Words were the appearance and fantasy of truth. Words imitate spoken language, and spoken language imitates the soul. Written culture is the farthest from the soul.

In Plato's view, the writing culture and all human, technical culture were the "medicine" of the soul, tonic, or poison. People could gain wisdom, or it would damage the soul. Although Plato could not block the popularization and power of writing culture by himself and would express his views in words, he still retained the form of dialogue and kept his mind clear and critical about new technologies.

3.2. Printing Technology

The writing culture did not stand still as criticized by Socrates and Plat. Although it was only the privilege of a few intellectuals and elites at first, the advent of papyrus made writing more portable. Its transmission power across time and space and the ability to prevent memory are still fascinating. The invention of Gutenberg's movable type printing in the 15th century made the Western world enter the printing era from handwritten characters. Although it was printed manually by craftsmen, printing brought the "Bible" widely circulated and was no longer just the privilege of a few people. Books and newspapers were produced accordingly, and many humanistic works were also disseminated by printing technology. Printing technology significantly promoted the process of the Renaissance, religious reform, and the industrial revolution. The advantages of printing were only seen by the church but also by its opponents. No one could resist the charm of this new thing. Even the old powers that had been attacked would not oppose it with great fanfare but would censor the content to maintain the old order. Printing allows each of us to think and talk. Moreover, strengthening self-awareness allows individuals to gain freedom of mind, especially the working class, who have conflicted with the highest power and social order after mastering the new technology.

Innes's "The Bias of Communication" and "The Communication of the Empire" to re-understand printing. In his view, media technology was biased, time-biased media was conducive to the inheritance of a civilization, and space-oriented media was conducive to controlling the central and border. The space-biased printing technology would bring the monopoly of civilizations, such as the expansion of empires and even the threat of war. Printing brought the visual standard, which also deprived oral culture. However, he is not wholly

opposed to printing but falls into a contradiction. Because books are the result of long-term thinking, which complement each other with oral culture, and they both constitute the present audiovisual culture. Havelock showed a positive attitude towards print culture and criticized Plato's oral culture thought in the school of the media environment. He believed that what could carry ideas and culture was not the fleeting oral culture but the ink marks that are engraved on the written and timeless notes.

3.3. Electronic Technology

The start of the Industrial Revolution ushered in a genuinely technological age for humanity, but it suffered from setbacks from the Luddite radicalism. In 1815, with the advent of the steam revolution, machine production gradually replaced manual production. Many traditional craftsmen lost their jobs. Meanwhile, wages in machine factories were cut, and working hours increased. People fall into day-to-day capital-labor. Hence, handicraftsmen formed a group and began to smash machines on a large scale, especially cotton spinning machines, and to oppose machine-based industrialization. This event essentially was a resistance to social inequality, low wages, and the exploitation of child labor, not an absolute rejection of technology. They are aware of the power of technology, and not afraid that machines will deprive them of their living space but the mighty power and advantages will be used for threatening the entire society and human beings themselves. Finally, they had to accept the fact of the machine society.

Mass-communication technologies were coming, such as steam printing and film, whose power in information and entertainment amazes techno-optimists, but a vast majority of scholars take a pessimistic stance. New industrial technologies disrupt peaceful rural life, forcing Concentrating on cities, and it has brought environmental pollution, crime, cultural clashes, and political chaos. For many, the mass media represented all the evils of 19th-century urban life: pandering to the vulgar tastes of the lower classes, inciting political riots, breaking traditional cultural norms, and so on. New media were always used to give meaning and a tool of struggle, this was also a reason for opposition.

Especially, ruling class thinks mass newspapers were often catering to the low class with superficial content, which was a disease of society. Aristocratic class opposed it to restore the old order in its favor. They were not completely against all technology, but the technology that destroys their power.

In 1945, George Orwell's "*1984*" express the pessimistic about the future of humanity. Technology served the rulers, and people were in a state of being monitored at any time. The freedom of information is controlled, and technology is used to strengthen violence and control over people. Aldous Huxley's "*Brave New World*" that technology would rule the world. Everything is well, and people would gradually fall in love with the entertainment and culture brought by industrial technology. However, here all thoughts were controlled. People had no ego, no feelings, no emotions, no thinking. Thoreau & Jones (1964) in "Walden" describe another world different from the post-industrial society in the

United States, which actually revealed the characteristics of anti-industrial civilization and technology. He thought in the process, human life seemed to be turned into a dull material force. People were gradually alienated, and people were used as means to achieve ends. Thoreau's decided to huge nature. As shown in the, he chose to communicate when he needed to, limiting access to the lives of others, which would make contact more meaningful (Figure 1). His purpose was a desire to live, not the fear of it. Technology does not matter whether it is good or bad, which depends the degree of interaction with technology, from the choice of what kind of life we need. Intellectual always was sensitive to technology than public.

Since the Industrial Revolution, the printing age has ended, electronic technologies appeared, such as telephones, telegraphs, and broadcasting. In the 1967s, a Western anti-tech movement similar to Thoreau became a trend, especially the TV.

In the 1970s, 96% (Comstock, 1993) of American households owned a television. World War II accelerated United States to an industrial country, and people worked with standard working hours, had more leisure time. Moreover, the increase in income also allowed people to spend more money on entertainment, such as TV. There were not too many entertainment facilities at that time. Based on a strong economy, with more consumer products competing in the market and the more demand for advertising, television had become the most popular mass medium in modern society. Television profoundly impacted society, politics, economy, culture, and people's daily life. Television met people's needs for entertainment, social relationship, and spirituality. The theory of use and satisfaction was often used to explain the role of TV in society.

In the United States at that time, with the change in traditional social structure, people gradually left their small towns to make a living in distant places, and schools and churches lost their dominant position in the process of children's growth. The rate of juvenile delinquency increased significantly. At this time, the rising social movements, especially the civil rights and anti-Vietnam War movements, further aggravated social unrest. The young people behaved strangely, listening to alternative music and creating a generation gap with parents, especially conservative middle-class parents. What role the media, especially television, played during this social transition has been debated.

With media critics beginning to accuse television of replacing the home, school, and church as the primary vehicle for youth socialization, television became the subject of criticism, especially media violence. The National Commission on the Causes and Prevention of Violence, established in 1968, submitted a report titled violence and the Media (Lange, Baker, & Ball-Rokeach, 1969), which

"I went to the woods because I wanted to live deliberately. I wanted to live deep and suck out all the marrow of life ! To put to rout all that was not life. And not when I came to die, discover that I had not lived."

Figure 1. "Walden".

showed that long-term exposure to TV violence would affect real violence. Neil Postman, in the book *The Disappearance of Childhood* (Postman, 1985), discussed children's innocence, plasticity and curiosity gradually degenerated and became "pseudo-adults" under the influence of electronic technology from 1950 to 1979. TV showed new stories 24 hours a day, but it was fragmented, lacked historical context and system, and sitcoms and soap operas lead children without unique personalities and interests.

In *Amusing Ourselves to Death*, Neil Postman thought political, religious, educational, sports, business, and any other public sphere content was increasingly appearing as entertainment and becoming a kind of the spirit of the culture. Humans began have become vassals of entertainment silently without complaint in 1985. Essentially, TV was entertainment, but people gradually became slaves to TV. What we love will ruin us.

While Neil Postman was concerned about the harm of technology to people's thinking and spirit, many scholars felt the relationship between technological development and humans were not optimistic. Horkheimer, Marcuse, Adorno, and many other Frankfurt School scholars insisted on the power of the essence of media technology from humanism and exposed that technology was dominating humans' consciousness in capitalist society" by discussing media technology as an ideological tool. Rulers used media technology to create false needs and suppress people's real needs. Thus, technology's rationality replaced people's critical thinking. People became "one-dimensional" people. Technology's invasion of culture created the loss of humanistic significance and value.

The public also thinks about technology, especially TV, which has always made them brood. In 1990, American household television ownership rose to 98 percent. People at this time were already in an environment with relatively rich media, such as books, newspapers, movies, radio, even the Internet. Meanwhile, with the awareness and ability of self-criticism growing, people actively began to reflect on their media-saturated environment and became interested in a more "natural" and "simple" life. Movements advocating "return to the earth" appeared. They began to be more careful about its impact on their private and family. Many problems the TV media brought began to be paid attention to.

Typically, in 1995, the "White Dot" organization in Chicago and many groups launched an "anti-television movement" which was designated the last week of April each year as "Television Off Week", calling on Americans to turn off the TV during this week to form a social environment that is not affected by TV, and completely get rid of the bombing and bewitching of TV. This initiative was supported by the *American Medical Association* and the *American Federation of Teachers*, and affected other countries, UK, Canada, Taiwan, and Japan to participate.

Anti-TV groups believed people staring at their mobile phones in most of their leisure time crowd out the time to read, exercise, and communicate with relatives. Compared to traditional media such as blank paper, books, plays, and movies, TV was inferior culture, lacked cultural capital, and was a drug affected individual mental health. Excessive use of TV was a modern disease (Mittell,

2000). Television was the pathogen, were “alienation, dehumanization, and apathy”. People linked it to antisocial activity and were most worried about TV’s change of thinking and consciousness, “TV is destroying my mind” “TV makes people stupid”.

For children, mental health, thinking skills, creativity, and imagination will be affected, especially the impact of media violence and drug use on youth. Middle-class white people worried their children would become violent and lazy (This showed that members of anti-TV groups mainly were middle-class white people). When TV issues were related to race and class, it was already a significant social problem that must be solved through control and potential elimination.

3.4. Internet Technology

With the creation of the World Wide Web in 1991, the Internet began to become popular in the United States. Until the early 21st century, from education to civic elections, leisure, and entertainment, using the Internet had become an indispensable rule for the survival of modern society. However, at the very beginning, the phenomenon of not using the Internet existed. The results of not using the internet, such as information poor, digital segregation, and racial information segregation, were also discussed. Besides lack of access to the Internet, many complex factors caused people not to use the Internet. Economic and material foundations, educational level, and cognitive limits are among the reasons, especially technological fear was a more critical factor. Early research in the 1980s estimated that 30 to 35 (Selwyn, 2003) percent of all users experienced some degree of anxiety when they first used a computer. Even if there was no actual threat in the use process, they still felt that technology profoundly threatened human beings. Most scholars believed that technophobia was a natural phenomenon at the time, and Internet anxiety would inevitably decrease as computers became more common. However, after two years, research showed that technophobia was still a severe problem.

On the one hand, some scholars thought that under the explanation of the above four single factors, the use of the Internet was regarded as “normal”. On the contrary, non-use of the Internet was a problem that should be “solved”. The beautiful premise of the Internet was that it was an inherently desirable and beneficial activity for all people. The Internet was regarded as a tool to achieve a better life. According to the innovation diffusion theory, not using the Internet was choosing not to be part of the information society, which was unreasonable and would slow down the development of the Internet community. These opinions ignored the rationality of individual Choice and free will.

It had rational views to understand the non-use of the internet. Some scholars thought “non-use can be seen as a positive part of the social choice, rather than an inevitable obstacle to technological progress”. Whether people used Internet technology, the key was its usefulness and relevance to individuals. But, some structural environmental factors, such as institutions, had an impact on the daily life of using technology (Selwyn, 2003). More important, not using Internet

technology was a “resistance strategy”. It was a common practice to obtain one’s deprived rights and maintain the community and actual power. Some scholars pointed out that those who do not use technology were generally capable people, who were anti-technology out of rejection of ideology, the impact of Internet technology on traditional work patterns, as well as a rejection of “anti-sensory” computing culture and the linear, logical simplification of “modernist computational aesthetics”. Technology has no essential attribute bias, but it is a product of culture, and the Internet has been a product of competition from the very beginning, endowed with various meanings. As shown in **Figure 2**, other scholars thought it was a normal phenomenon from different angles (**Figure 2**).

With the public Internet being privatized in 1995 (Chun, 2008), Americans accepted the spirit of freedom and openness. In 1999, “Business Week” announced the arrival of the Internet era which thought Internet would promote the development of the new information economy (Curran et al., 2016). Negroponte believed that the Internet was an essential part of the democratized digital revolution, where the public gets what it wants, the monopoly of the media giants was destroyed, and consumers get personalized customization. Citizens could master information, control the government, empower the grassroots, dispel bottom-up elite power, participate in democracy, express their opinions, and monitor the government and the media. The people also really felt the power of the Internet and hoped the vision of a better life of capitalism could be realized. After ten years of changes, everyone’s focus has shifted from individuals to society, focusing on the impact on society, politics, economy, culture, and environment brought about by digital online. Until 2010, “connection” became the core element of digital cultural development (Tan & Wang, 2010; van Dijck, 2013).

However, with the commercialization of the Internet, people found the reality was very different from the ideal at the beginning, and the prophecy of the Internet did not seem to be realized. The monopoly of business giants continued to exacerbate social inequality; individuals were involved in the market system and became “free labor” of Internet companies; personal privacy was commodified into the production of surplus-value, and the claws of capitalism extended to the most private areas of the family; Internet addiction had seriously endangered physical and mental health. The Internet was eroding one’s subjectivity like a drug, and real-life had been messed up. At this time, the people began to awaken that Internet myth’s deceptiveness and to save themselves.

In 2010, the “*digital suicide*” published on Facebook by artist Sean Dockray had caused discussion (Karppi, 2011). This “*digital suicide*” did not happen suddenly. In 2009, digital suicide had become a trend (Karppi, 2011). Correspondingly, the “National Offline Day” initiated by the United States in 2010,

“The use of the Internet is not a lifetime thing, it is not something that users want to have forever, and many former Internet users have decided to give up the joys of cyberspace. Not to mention that the social Internet was not ubiquitous at the time, and many low-income households, Rural households, and black households still use limited home telephones.”

Figure 2. Different opinions about internet (Selwyn, 2003).

known as *the “Digital Sabbath”*, encouraged the public to abandon electronic devices like mobile phones. From the first Friday sunset to Saturday sunset in March every year, and to spend more time reflecting quietly, communicating with nature, connecting with friends, rebuilding the self and community, aiming to restrain online time, reduce media dependence. A series of disconnect practices began to emerge, deleting social accounts, undoing friendships, removing software, and not using mobile phones, delaying replies. Those who were deeply endangered by the Internet began to realize they must escape from such a chaotic world, come out of the lost Internet to find themselves, and use “disconnection” to reject the solidification of identity and class generated by social media. They must respond to information saturation, overload, and disenfranchisement brought on by “always-on” and “always connected”.

Importantly, resisting the internet technology had become more common around 2010 (Bennett, 2010). Scholars also began to pay attention to the seemingly “abnormal” phenomena in post-connectionist societies. The book *The Shallows: What the Internet Is Doing to Our Brains* discussed how the Internet shaped our behavior through brain nerves, and explored whether we were enslavers or enslaved people of the Internet (Carr, 2020)? Many kinds of research on the motivations, situations, specific behaviors, and meanings of disconnection have appeared. In *Disconnecting with Social Networking Sites*, Wright formally proposed the concept of “disconnection”. As mentioned by scholars, “disconnecting from the Internet” was a necessary choice that acted as a social lubricant, which was not the opposite of connection, but for deeper connections (Light & Cassidy, 2014).

The proposal of the “right to disconnect” in 2017 and the “remote office” of the epidemic in 2020 brought disconnection to the public’s attention again, and relevant laws and regulations began to appear worldwide. The “right to disconnect” proposal meant that employees were no longer exercising this right under traditional employment conditions but “permanent online” conditions. This right was recognized and even stipulated at the legal level. Although disconnection is allowed, the connection is the recognized and legalized form. Disconnection does not seem to be an active choice but a passive one in the general environment. There has been little discussion devoted to the “right of disconnection”, which contradicts the connection. We need to deeply understand how users who are still disconnected in today’s era view their behaviors.

The best way to understand an era is to look at those on the fringes. This way of deliberately keeping a distance from Internet technology is still different from the connection culture. Therefore, this article will focus on users themselves, understanding what understanding do they have of their own proactive and voluntary disconnection practices?

4. Methodology

This paper presents some findings about some people who had deliberately quit

one or more of their media accounts but continued using other social media platforms.

I found many actors discussing their disconnection about social media or phones when I was reading the content of the platform named “Reddit”, which has become one of the most popular social media in the west. Differently, Reddit focuses on building online forums and virtual communities around various hot news topics. Meanwhile, users can choose or set up according to their interests or value in multiple subreddits where they post comments and discuss related topics in-depth with other users.

Therefore, I chose much discussion about the disconnection of a group called “no surfing” as the object of this study. The group was founded in 2011, and it currently has 117,789 users. The main content of the group is “Stop living your life on the Internet” to improve work efficiency and reduce unconscious Internet time. The community discusses this content about how disconnectors disconnect from the Internet and social media and how they understand this behavior.

This paper aims to recognize disconnectors how to understand their disconnect behaviors. Some papers discussed authors how understand people’s disconnections, but I focus on people’s opinions about their leaving.

In this process, a snowball sampling strategy is used, following the qualitative research techniques for locating people who might be otherwise difficult to find (Tracy, 2019).

Firstly, I read some books, papers, and materials to organize the content about Anti-Technology.

Secondly, I select some posts which are according to “hotness” (when users post a post, everyone votes on their content, and the content will appear at the top of the page according to “hotness”). Meanwhile, I select some comments about discussions. A total of 200 posts and 1646 comments were selected.

Thirdly, based on these original materials, I repeatedly read and analyze these texts with the method of “Thematic Analysis” and get some findings.

5. Results and Discussion

Many researchers have discussed the cause and reason why actors decided to stop using some social media platforms, for example, splitting attention, wasting time, and creating anxiety. First and foremost, it is hurtful to themselves and life. Among these valid samples extracted, everyone has already performed various disconnection practices, including turning off social media and not using mobile phones, computers, and phones that are not connected to the Internet. Consequently, the following chapter covers some discussions among practitioners and analyzes the meanings of active disconnection.

5.1. New Connected Lifestyle

Michael Harris divided the people on Earth into two groups in his book called “The End of Absence”. One group learned to live and get along with this society

before the Internet. Another is digital natives who were born after the internet (Figure 3).

These people before the Internet seem to be childish, but they are not outdated, which means that those who complain already have known another way of expression and way of life. Hence, as outsiders from less digital times and places, their experience is a criterion to measure the Internet and electronic media.

More importantly, many people after the internet are also making active attempts to disconnect from the Internet when they cannot think of the need except the internet in real life. It is horrible that the internet has become our all life, especially for younger. After the Carrington event in 1895, the sun released a vast flame and formed beam particles, known as solar storms, which caused massive damage to the electronic systems on Earth. In 2012, the Royal Institute of Engineering of Great Britain believed the event would occur after 200 years. That means more natural disasters can destroy our wonderful, mechanized internet life. For instance, a flood gets a discussion about humans and technology in Henan, China. What will happen if there is no Internet and our machines stop working? How do we survive?

At this point, these so-called "Generation Z" are born in the technology environment and not only enjoy the convenience of technology but also suffer the harm of technology. They have no idea how to deal with pressure and trouble such as natural diseases or when the elector and the internet do not exist (Figure 4).

Human beings always pursue something different from the time when they were growing up. "Generation Z" is moving away from the screen and the internet. For them, the Internet is not new, which cannot satisfy their curiosity and

The subject of disconnection practice is not a privilege but a basic need everyone can have. When the "formers" in the 1950s and 1960s experienced the whirlpool of the Internet, of course, including those who were later of the Internet era due not affording, they thought disconnection was a way to back former happiness because the Internet era has lost the precious things in the past. For example, it is a pleasure to meet people face to face, even argue, even if there is no mobile phone and no internet.

" Social media can allow a non-social person to actively seek companionship online, connect with people, and add value to one's life, but over time it becomes toxic. 'Chat' instead of 'communication' "Connection" instead of "dialogue" allows us to immerse ourselves in the connection function of social media every day, share our feelings and thoughts, and use social media to ask questions, but have we communicated? Whether there is a spark of thought or Collision, the comment function of social media may allow us to exchange ideas. However, when a bunch of true and false information is mixed, fragmented, and incomprehensible, a few words are placed in front of us. We feel a group of demons dancing, not a tumbling thought Truth. People seem to forget how people talk and interact on social media. "

Figure 3. "The End of Absence".

" I hate that they are forced to do it, I hate that it might make things worse, I hate that I grew up in technology but cannot think of anything to do outside ."

Figure 4. "The End of Absence".

pursuit of excitement. These young people are tired of the digital age and question if this world is supposed to be. Indeed, they want to see what the world has to offer besides the Internet? Like the older people born before the internet enjoy new technologies, young people who try to disconnect actively explore another new way of life. It is a way to find a balance between the familiar reality and the freshness.

Disconnecting from the internet means the silence of certain things. However, disconnected people have been active in finding ways to fill the silence and are aware that the internet has occupied our lives far more than it should.

After disconnecting, people devote themselves to their real life, such as reading, climbing mountains, traveling with their families, meeting with friends regularly, paying attention to the real people and the closest people, conversating with strangers, and mainly trying to save and focus on concentration and memory which deprived by internet. Meanwhile, mindfulness, flow, and meditation have become their living habits, focusing on the present life, the surrounding environment, the people, the smell and temperature, and the light, and letting their thoughts drift through their minds (Figure 5).

There is a unique phenomenon that Disconnection is a relief for particular groups. Those people called themselves “patients” who originally had ADHD, social phobia, and anhedonia. The stimulation of the Internet just catered to their symptoms and worsened them. Disconnection brings them back to their fundamental way of life, and returning to the tranquility of the natural world is the only way to save them.

5.2. Active Pursuit of Self

Active disconnection implies individual self-reflection and self-challenge. Many actors say they entered the Internet partly because they cannot find people who do not use social media in real life. There are others because of the emptiness of their own lives, the lack of people who can communicate and connect in-depth and can only make up for it with the Internet.

The most important thing to take the initiative to disconnect is to realize that

“Disconnection is something to be proud of. You are learning to enjoy things in real life without fanfare in cyberspace. Be happy and excited about things in your way, not because it is trending Or some rabid addict who has been tweeting about it.”

“ Focus on the real things in life, and come out of those perfect pictures like a mentally ill recovered. It is like entering a new world, a new perspective on life. ”

“ The most obvious thing about disconnection is that time slows down, and an hour seems like an eternity. The internet does not make time itself lost or slow down. It is there at its own pace from beginning to end. It is just that we do not use it properly. Disconnection does not make time more or less but focuses on experiencing time and experiencing the power of the moment. Maybe time is still flying, and what is different from the Internet is that the way is different and the experience is different.”

Figure 5. Three disconnectors’ posts in “no surfing”.

we are lost on the Internet. We need to pursue ourselves.

The new stimulation of the Internet releases dopamine, which keeps us excited for a long time and never gets tired. Algorithm recommendation fills our brain with what we like. However, is it all we own? Especially, absolute worship brings absolute dependence. When all our necessities are moved to the Internet, it seems that we, as the main body, have also been moved to the Internet (Figure 6). “Likes” on social media make us feel that so many people like us, the opening comment function of social media makes you oppose social inequality, and the internet helps you get a sense of achievement and recognition. However, those who tried to disconnect themselves began to find that the “like” function of social media made them afraid of being rejected by the Internet and enslaved by “social approval”. Sometimes, we change their views to adapt to strangers on the Internet. Then, we are devoted to expressing our feelings instead of in-depth and critical thinking.

Disconnection means they realize the limitations and are incapable of solving problems in real life. Being addicted to the Internet is just an escape from real life (Figure 7). The disconnected person said that when they endlessly circulate on social media, their original calm state of mind will become highly emotional because of the endless information and others’ perfect life. The disconnection is a destructive power to ignore it and not be disturbed. In addition, they always are addicted to social media when they feel stressed, depressed, or isolated, rather than only to be more awake after disconnecting. Perhaps the internet is a tool to express anger and destructive emotion, to satisfy our needs. We have not found why we anger and the essence of matter buried behind. The internet does not solve the real problem when we are done venting. Disconnection means we must be more honest with ourselves and think about how, where, and with whom to solve these problems instead of just running away.

For these, disconnection means more actively challenging themselves. Sherry Turkle pointed out that technology is more accessible to master and control than to deal with people. It is reported that the younger generation is more comfortable getting along with mobile phones than people. Disconnectors decide to connect or converse with real people and truly resolve and challenge those unavoidable

" We seem to lose ourselves on the internet and even become hateful and dislike ourselves. our dopamine does not know about ourselves. "

" Why do we need all the information in the world to be constantly at our fingertips? The information we need is right in front of us, but so obsessed with social media we lose the ability to perceive it. "

Figure 6. Two disconnectors’ posts in “no surfing”.

" For many people, the Internet is their way of escaping reality. If we leave it one day, we will be at a loss. In other words, what we are addicted to is not the tool we use to escape reality but more addicted to escaping ourselves and responsibility. "

Figure 7. One disconnector’s post in “no surfing”.

difficulties to achieve a better self (Figure 8).

More importantly, active disconnectors realize that the mobile phone is the bondage of their spirit and need to break their dependence on the Internet. Moreover, they hope to take back the spiritual space and power taken away by social media and the Internet and restore the initiative of the main human body (Figure 9).

Nowadays, mobile phones and the internet free our hands and brain, remind us when to drink and breathe, and we do not concern if we are lost because we have apps to navigate. The Internet can do something that belongs to humans. Emotion and empathy, as essential points in technology development, are being overcome. Facial recognition judges our emotions through 24 points. Smart bracelets can detect our emotions by detecting skin temperature. Humans are seemingly managed and controlled by phones and the internet. We hope to regard technology as the mediator of chaotic real-life, tidying our lives into something meaningful. However, when our autonomy and independence need to achieve by the internet, even controlled by it, our life is designed by the internet rather than by ourselves to find and experience. In addition, our autonomy and independence are not genuine. Disconnected people are actively reducing the use of the internet. They are trying to remember and explore the way to travel. They are retaking the power to control their life and definite their goals and destinations.

Active disconnection means a firm determination to be independent. Disconnected people usually know they will face all kinds of discomfort and reactions but still optimistically view it as a proud journey. In this process, people will face withdrawal from the beginning. They must maintain their consciousness to control

" One can choose to remain comfortable, but no one is strong because of comfort, just as no one is strong without exercise. We can continue complaining about circumstances, becoming miserable, and being the wrong person according to our choice. However, we can also choose to take the path that feels easy to us and face the problem head-on, as uncomfortable and even frightening as it may be, but that is the only way.

" I browse Reddit and other sites because it is easier than having a real hobby or facing life. However, just because something is hard does not mean I cannot do it. Push yourself to do it. Ask Why do you do it yourself, then do it. "

Figure 8. Two disconnectors' posts in "no surfing".

"The internet has made it impossible for you to control yourself or even get yourself in the vices of the internet. "

" Even if you cannot control yourself, you cannot passively change it, but set the Internet to your ideal state and let it efficiently serve you. "

"We need to take the initiative in life. Wandering in the world of the Internet arises from an illusory consciousness. Without our direction and purpose, we do not know where the Internet will take us? Nor do we know that the Internet will lead to our lives. Where are you taking?"

Figure 9. Three disconnectors' posts in "no surfing".

it at all times and train the brain to use social media with the purpose and the need rather than instinct. It just like “digital detox” and is painful initially. Sudden leaving leaves us alone, but it is the process of discovering ourselves.

The lonely self is the embodiment of independence and freedom. Disconnected people know lonely is always there, and it is time to take it out and clean it up again. Compared with writing a traditional paper diary where they can independently feel the self and enjoy life, many people are playing themselves on the Internet. They do some things which must depend on the others’ comments. They lost the powerful psychology of the lonely mind explorer and cannot grope for the mystery of their existing Sex. Humanity’s most outstanding achievements are achieved when they are alone. Absolute solitude brings independent thinking, and objective thinking requires solitude. After going to the outside world, we need to return to our isolated room for digestion and absorption.

Disconnectors seek loneliness by deleting and leaving the internet. They are reducing choices to gain freedom and finding other ways to meet needs and desires, such as experiencing real life, reading books, and thinking independently (Figure 10). They no longer need the approval of others to verify themselves. The more independent an individual is, the stronger the anti-connectivity is, and the higher the strength of obtaining freedom.

5.3. Resistance to Media and Capital Power

Active disconnection is the result of careful consideration, not impulsiveness. In 2009, “digital suicide” on Facebook became a trend, announcing one’s departure to one’s relatives on social media and directly logging off the account (Karppi, 2011). “Digital suicide” continues. This radical and extremely active disconnection is a resistance to the ecological media hegemony and resistance to the precise algorithms of big data to regain one’s privacy.

Disconnection can be regarded as a rebellious expression of users against new technologies. They are firmly maintaining the tradition and original intention of the Internet (Figure 11).

Firstly, the Internet has not brought about complete equality, and grassroots media and entrepreneurs have not completely turned around. Media giants still monopolize the Internet, and the source of fragmented information that people accept from various platforms is still the mainstream media. Alternatively, some excellent niche software we have been exposed to has been acquired, and the

" Continuing to use social media fuels narcissism, false happiness, and social media misery. We consider ourselves unique and share the joy we see with everyone, hoping everyone can accept it. It is joyful, but it is much imagination that we spontaneously give. We do get many likes, but that is just the surface, people spend just a few minutes learning about our life, and they do not care about our imaginatively. "

"The feeling of being disconnected is sometimes enjoyable, and being disconnected makes them feel like they are 100 percent or not, instead of boring and empty."

Figure 10. Two disconnectors’ posts in “no surfing”.

" As the use of social media and the Internet continues, the operating model behind it and the behavioral logic of social media platforms are gradually mastered by users, and they slowly begin to reflect on the behavior itself. "

" Disconnection is also a way of resisting, resisting business empires taking away your most precious things, freedom, personality, life. "

"The internet uses our natural curiosity to keep us online. Curiosity and creativity are part of who we are, but sadly the only reason a capitalist society wants us to do anything is money and status, the good things about ourselves used again and again ."

Figure 11. Three disconnectors' posts in "no surfing".

internet is centralized again. Regardless of whether we can access all the information, expressing our voice on social media means that our voice is difficult to be heard in larger organizations and the real world, so we try to speak up. However, our voice is hard to be heard because the mainstream media are constructing the whole environment.

Choosing to disconnect actively and actively digital suicide has also become a protest by some radicals against the mainstream media. They are providing a negative attitude towards the media and claiming they are tired of being caught up in endless news consumption all day.

Secondly, people gain autonomy but become a commodity. The Internet's original purpose was to build a medium for everyone to share knowledge, serving social interests, not personal ones. However, as the Internet gradually enters the market, we are all included in the market system. The "opening", "interaction" and "decentralization" of the Internet have ended the scarcity of resources. The era of the "free economy" has brought about social media. In the operation mode, we can use it without any threshold, but the price is to sell personal information and privacy, sell our own time and attention. Individuals are digitized into a value that commercial capitalists can use. As long as we use the Internet, whether voluntarily or not, we have been integrated into the market system, and our every behavior is being commoditized. Social media gives us the opportunity and space for self-expression and even the autonomy to collaborate in creation. However, this autonomy is precisely capitalist production's core and condition. In the "free economy", "digital labor" is carried out, and the person is still dominated by capitalism. The precise algorithm of big data uses our information for production and conducts mass production by providing customized, personalized recommendations to promote consumption. Our personality is only a commodity.

Does the Internet Mean Freedom? Internet liberals advocate uncontrolled, but as an important force for political, economic, social, and cultural development, it is necessary to have the minimum regulation. For this reason, Internet capitalists voluntarily conduct self-regulation, and the state also authorizes companies to conduct self-regulation. However, on the one hand, capitalists use data to monitor personal privacy and use it as a database of netizens governed by the state.

On the other hand, they collect public privacy for capital reproduction. However, people begin to be wary of technology and take action when the tentacles of technology extend to the private sphere, the place of personal action, and the family (Figure 12).

The important thing for those who try to disconnect actively is not how advanced the technology is but what they gain and lose. Moreover, those people are willing to exert their subjectivity to defend their due power and use their insufficient strength to resist capital exploitation. When offline becomes a new state, online becomes the exception, and the family space changes from a public space that invades privacy to a private space. They believe that self-awareness is powerful enough not to succumb to the traps set up by social media and the Internet to control and track people.

5.4. Reflection on the Relationship between People and Technology

MIT sociology professor Shirley Turkle (Arnd-Caddigan, 2015) published *Alone Together: Why We Expect More from Technology and Less from Each Other* and again reflected on Internet technology. While enjoying the convenience of the Internet, we also suffer from the loneliness brought by technology, so how to have the best relationship between technology and human? People are similarly sensitively aware of the changes that Internet technology has brought to themselves and actively respond and change when scholars are exploring the relationship between self and technology (Figure 13).

Unlike scholars, most people have not explicitly contacted or thought about the relationship between people and technology, and their thinking comes from their daily life experiences. Scholars' theoretical thoughts are not purely abstract and detached from reality but echo people's thoughts and behaviors.

Is disconnection normal? Is disconnection an anti-tech? Are we doing the right way to disconnect? Some people have been cautious about Internet technology from the beginning. Some have experienced the test of technology over

"My home feels like a private space again. Here is the biggest change: When Zoom and stuff like that invaded my living room in 2020, it felt like it became some kind of public space, invading my privacy. Since After I cut the umbilical cord, that feeling went away."

Figure 12. One disconnector's post in "no surfing".

" Disconnection is not anti-technology. For technology, we just need to deny all the negative effects it brings to our mental health and happiness. Social media is not the enemy."

" Internet life is too much fun, but very few people advise us to hit the brakes, and even if it is, it does not take action. "

" Old stuff, old school way does not mean bad. Disconnection has changed the relationship between people and the Internet. Even if it is not the way it wants to be, but you are moving in the right direction, it just takes time to let It becomes a habit. "

Figure 13. One disconnector's post in "no surfing".

"Just because something is normal does not make it healthy or right, and I think I will try to be a rebel."

Figure 14. One disconnector's post in "no surfing".

time and responded to the current technological environment by leaving the internet. However, they have their ideas and judgments about behavior, technology, and the relationship between technology and people.

When the life of being addicted to the Internet is now considered to be the life of a "normal person", everyone is making the best use of everything to enjoy the convenience of the Internet, but you are disconnecting it, which is considered anti-mainstream. However, the disconnected person seems determined to be a rebel, working hard for what works best for them, not what is normal (**Figure 14**). Because the way people behave on the Internet is not how people should behave in real life. According to the 2021 Digital Consumer Trends Survey, some 22% of Italians stopped using social media last year, mainly due to content boredom, the over-presence of fake news, and privacy concerns, with some guessing that Italians' Vivid body language communicates more and conveys more information. No matter the reason, at least it shows that the disconnection is not the behavior of one person but the behavior of a group of people, and it has happened in life.

In the views of those who initiatively disconnect, disconnecting is not completely anti-technology and not completely isolated from the Internet world, but strives to make the Internet a tool that serves human beings. The key lies in balancing real life and Internet life. Proactive disconnection addresses the underlying problem rather than blaming Internet technology for all problems. The people who actively disconnect hope that the relationship between people and technology can develop healthily. Our relationship with ICT today is incorrect, and humanity has never had such a deep relationship with technology. However, an incorrect relationship is not bad because it means we are not controlled entirely by technology, and our bad relationship with technology is still possible to improve, and it is being improved.

6. Conclusion

We can find particular characteristics from Socrates and Plato's opposition to writing technology to today's Internet disconnection behavior: some people have a questioned attitude when technology comes first. Moreover, in the middle, it will be broken down into various narrow-mindedness. After technology matures, the questioned attitudes still exist, and more people begin to rethink the technology and have critical thoughts. Besides, while paying attention to old problems, more and more attention is paid to new problems arising from the general growth of media technology and its organization. That is the inevitable rule and result of adapting humans and technology. More importantly, in traditional society, resisting new technologies was general for more people with certain privileges. However, with the advent of the electronic age and the develop-

ment of popular culture, more and more ordinary people no longer passively accept technology without thought. They will spontaneously ask questions and criticize technology according to their experience.

Jaron Lanier believes that the excellent way to test whether an economy is humane is to see whether accidents or damage will happen when people withdraw from this economy. According to this logic, disconnection is an excellent way to test whether the development of Internet technology is humane. Similarly, it is a method to test whether people are independent. Those who want to stay away from digital technology are not necessarily those who cannot keep up with the times, and those who question technology are not necessarily violent Luddites, not to mention the purpose of Luddites themselves is to safeguard their right to exist and resist social inequality. In the Internet age, Active disconnection means they can maintain their independent perception of the online and offline, digital and natural worlds. They are free to choose to appreciate both worlds and navigate between them easily.

People are ends, not means. The purpose of humans is not on the internet but in the real world. When the internet becomes as common as it used to be with television, we cannot forget the point and purpose of using technology. We must consider what is more important in life and what is the key to life. Internet technology does not promise that it will bring us a better life, but we humans give it a beautiful meaning, hoping to serve ourselves and make life better. So when something goes wrong in the use process, we should not only blame the Internet but try to solve the problems and have a healthy relationship with Internet technology.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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