

Network Collectivism

Jaromil's Journal of Musings

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0.1 Network Collectivism

A pre-lyrical attempt to overcome post-modernism and individualism, noted down in Vienna on a Stormy Monday in 2001.

Prelude

La destruction de la conscience individuelle represente pourtant une haute idee de culture, c'est une idee profonde de la culture d'où derive une forme toute nouvelle de civilisation. Ne pas se sentir vivre en tant qu'individu revient a échapper a cette forme redoutable du capitalisme que moi, j'appelle le capitalisme de la conscience puisque l'âme c'est le bien de tous.

Antonin Artaud, Messages révolutionnaires - 3 juin 1936, Mexico

Panorama

Free excerpts from Eben Moglen¹'s musings

Network Horizontality

The growth of the network rendered the non-propertarian alternative even more practical. What scholarly and popular writing alike denominate as a thing ("the Internet") is actually the name of a **social condition**: the fact that *everyone in the network society is connected directly, without intermediation, to everyone else*. The global interconnection of networks eliminated the bottleneck that had required a centralized software manufacturer to rationalize and distribute the outcome of individual innovation in the era of the mainframe.

Free Nature of Bitstreams

Software - whether executable programs, music, visual art, liturgy, weaponry, or what have you - consists of bitstreams, which although essentially indistinguishable are treated by a confusing multiplicity of legal categories. This multiplicity is unstable in the long term for reasons integral to the legal process. The unstable diversity of rules is caused by the need to distinguish among kinds of property interests in bitstreams. This need is primarily felt by those who stand to profit from the socially acceptable forms of monopoly created by those doing the shouting believe that these property rules are necessary not from any overt yearning for life in Murdochworld - though a little luxurious co-optation is always welcome - but because the metaphor of incentives, which they take to be not just an image but an argument, proves that these rules - despite their lamentable consequences - are necessary if we are to make good software. The only way to continue to believe this is to ignore the facts. At the center of the digital revolution, with the executable bitstreams that make everything else possible, **propertarian regimes not only do not make things better, they can make things radically worse.**

¹[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Special:Search?search=Eben Moglen](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Special:Search?search=Eben_Moglen)

Property vs. Progress

Property concepts, whatever else may be wrong with them, do not enable and have in fact retarded progress. In the network society, anarchism (or more properly, anti-possessive individualism) is a viable political philosophy. One main problem with anarchism as a social system is about transaction costs. But the digital revolution alters two aspects of political economy that have been otherwise invariant throughout human history. *All software has zero marginal cost in the world of the Net*, while the costs of social coordination have been so far reduced as to permit the rapid formation and dissolution of large-scale and highly diverse social groupings entirely without geographic limitation.

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