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Convenience Is An Opiate

BY  LORI WEINTZ SEPTEMBER 16, 2022 SOCIETY, TECHNOLOGY 11 MINUTE READ

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Opiate: (noun) a drug that acts to block pain, induce sedation or sleep, and produce calmness or euphoria. Opiates are associated with physiological tolerance, physical and psychological dependence, and addiction upon repeated or prolonged use.

I remember the days of not being able to meet up with someone because of miscommunication about where and when to meet. Once you were out of the house, you really had no way of contacting each other, sometimes leading to missed events and frustrations.

The convenience of the smart phone is almost too much to resist. Almost everyone carries one. The world is more interconnected than it's ever been. You can make calls, search the Web, take pictures, play games, watch movies, send information, email, get directions, and make purchases all through that little device that fits in your pocket. I really have no idea what "the Cloud" is, but all my pictures are stored there. Have you noticed ads pop up for items you've searched, or sometimes even just because you talked about something within the vicinity of a device? Google keeps track of where you drive and the buildings you enter, if your location is switched on.

At some point we need to ask if the increasing convenience of technology is worth the loss of privacy and freedom. Actually, that point arrived a long time ago, but a lot of people seem to be ignoring it. Right now we think we have control over which apps we upload and whether or not we want to participate in the digital world. In discussing this issue with an

engineer friend, he commented on how current technologies could easily be turned to surveillance and control tools; the structure is already largely in place.

Did you know that in May 2021, [a Covid-19 tracking platform was uploaded to all Androids and iPhones?](#) (For Androids go to Settings, click on Google, and the Covid-19 Exposure Notification is the first thing to pop up. For iPhones go to Apps and then Exposure Notifications.) The platform interacts with contact tracing apps being used by different states.

True, you can shut off the notifications, but you can't delete the platform. When some of my family was traveling from back east, their phones automatically notified them, in two different airports, that their Covid tracking was turned "off" and asked if they wanted to activate it. Some residents in Massachusetts were surprised to find that [MassNotify, launched on June 15, 2021](#), was uploaded and activated on their phones without their permission, leading them to call it "big brother" and "spyware."

Most of us have heard the statement that personal data is the new gold. There is big money in the collection and selling of people's personal data. Your data is used for marketing, but [governments are interested in you](#), too. For example, Cate Cadell of the *Washington Post* [wrote](#) in December 2021 that "China is turning a major part of its internal Internet-data surveillance network outward, mining Western social media, including Facebook and Twitter, to equip its government agencies, military and police with information on foreign targets."

[TikTok](#), a video-sharing platform with close ties to the Chinese Communist Party, is installed on hundreds of millions of devices, and is especially popular with young people. The cyber experts at [Proton Mail](#) "find TikTok to be a grave privacy threat that likely shares data with the Chinese government."

However, it goes much farther than obtaining information on personal details such as your date of birth, employment history, shopping preferences, and internet habits. Communist China is interested in your DNA. When Beijing Genomics Institute (BGI) set up labs in 18 countries during the pandemic, they also gained access to the DNA of the people who

provided samples for testing. [BGI says in stock market filings](#) that it aims to help the Communist Party excel in biotechnology. BGI contacted various states in the U.S. at the beginning of the pandemic and offered to set up Covid testing labs. The Office of National Intelligence encouraged the states that were contacted to decline the offer, citing concerns about how China might use personal data collected on Americans.

[National Public Radio reports](#) that “Biotech companies in China, the U.S. and elsewhere routinely collect DNA data and use it to help guide the development of cutting-edge medicines that can benefit people worldwide.” That sounds beneficial, but consider the source. The article states that “Beijing Genomics Institute says it abides by all the laws in countries where it operates.” Right. (A discussion of biotechnology and transhumanism will be the subject of a future post.)

I have been continually surprised and disappointed at the number of people I know who do not seem particularly disturbed by the collection of their data by others. With regard to cell phones they seem to think that it’s their phone, and they pay for it, so they have control. To see how quickly you can shift from control, to being controlled, look at examples from China and Canada.

In 2017, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) rolled out an [experimental facial recognition app](#) in the Guangdong province. Standing on their little blue circles in 2017, eerily prescient of pandemic social distancing, Chinese models explained how this new virtual ID system would be safer than the traditional physical identification cards.

To use the app, the user would download it onto their phone, fill out their personal information, take a selfie, and upload it to the national police database for confirmation of authenticity. If they lose their phone, they just deactivate everything by logging on to their WeChat account to change their password. So convenient. So trackable.

Facial recognition technology makes it much easier for the CCP to enforce [China’s social credit system](#) in which your behavior affects your access to life. Were you late with your library books? Did you jaywalk, forget to pay a bill, play too many video games, drop trash on the ground, post something on social media that the CCP didn’t like? Ding! Down goes your

social credit score, along with limitations on your access to education, employment, transportation, and food.

No worries, though, Wikipedia assures us that “The program is mainly focused on businesses, and is very fragmented, contrary to the popular misconception that it is focused on individuals and is a centralized system.” Sounds like the CCP wrote that. (And in fact, statements minimizing the intrusive nature of the social credit system were not in the Wiki article when I looked it up about a year ago.)

Starting in December 2019, all Chinese citizens are required by the CCP to have their face scanned in order to even purchase mobile-phone services. The CCP claims the new rule will “protect the legitimate rights and interests of citizens in cyberspace.” As if the Chinese Communist Party ever for one minute cared about citizens’ rights. The CCP spends more money on surveillance of its own citizens than it does on its military.

Yeah, but that’s China. That will never happen in the free world. Right? MIT Technology Review reported that Chinese tech firms are helping to create influential United Nations standards for technology that will help shape rules on how facial recognition is used around the world. But, back to digital wallets.

The idea of having all of your info from your driver’s license, to your bank access, medical records, and a myriad of insurance cards and membership cards all stored on one convenient digital device has its appeal, but it sets you up for being shut out, at the flip of a switch.

When the truckers in Canada became a nuisance to Prime Minister Justin Trudeau in February 2022, he issued directives to shut down the bank accounts of the truckers and anyone who donated money to them. Just like that, citizens engaged in peaceful protest were shut off from purchasing power. Trudeau also authorized (instructed) insurance companies to cancel trucker’s paid-up policies. Trudeau’s totalitarian response to the truckers put a spotlight on Canada’s plan, already in place, to consolidate Canadians’ multiple cards and financial and insurance documents into a digital app, administered by the banks. Convenience is great until it’s used against you.

Yeah, but that's Canada. They don't have a Bill of Rights. That won't ever happen in America, right? Hmmmmmm....Does anyone recall that in New York City you had to show proof of Covid vaccination in order to participate in society? Thousands of New Yorkers were not allowed inside restaurants, gyms, theaters, government facilities, and other locations for months, because they refused a medical treatment. I am unaware of any apologies having been made by overreaching government leaders or businesses for this gross violation of civil liberties during the pandemic.

Many people chose to get the Covid shots and use the vaccine passport on their devices out of convenience or fear, or both. The rationalization was that this was just for a "public health emergency." We won't be required to have digital passports, or use facial recognition technology, or some other scanning technology in order to participate in daily life in the future, right? That depends on what we allow governments and businesses to get away with. For example, in May 2021 Florida Governor Ron DeSantis issued an executive order preventing government entities and businesses from requiring proof of vaccination. But similar legislation failed in Utah, where the governor and some legislators claimed that it would interfere with private business. We only need to reflect on how the government continually used private businesses to enforce Covid mandates, through threats of fines and closures, to know that argument is disingenuous.

Some private businesses are moving forward with technology that "frees" the consumer from needing to carry cash or ID. Amazon has developed a really convenient way of making purchases, called Amazon One. It allows people to pay with their palm print. Whole Foods first installed Amazon One scanners at seven Seattle stores in April 2021, but in August 2022 announced plans to expand the palm scanner technology to 65 stores in California. It's all optional, of course.

Some may say, "Hey! If you don't like that Whole Foods installed palm print technology, just don't shop there. What's the big deal?" The big deal is the big picture. A convenient technology today can become a required technology tomorrow.

Karl Marx coined the phrase that "religion is the opium of the people." Then the famous newscaster Edward R. Murrow borrowed the phrase to say "TV is the opiate of the people." I

believe that convenience is the opiate of the people now, and that convenience is becoming more and more intricately entwined with technology, leading to a surveillance state.

The latest and greatest technology is often convenient, and even exciting, but we need to stop embracing every technological advance without question. As seen in China, Canada, New York City, and many other places, we are vulnerable to those who would use the opiate of “convenience” to harm us. I’m not sure what all the answers are, but I do know that we need to wake up and push back.

The World Economic Forum (WEF) recently rolled out a [Global Coalition for Digital Safety initiative](#). It’s designed to “accelerate public-private cooperation to tackle harmful content online.” The WEF feels they can make the internet a safer, more equitable place through the use of digital IDs, but it fails to mention which oh-so-wise overseers would be defining “harmful content.” Combine facial recognition technology and other human identifiers such as the iris and gait, with geolocation, and you can track and control everyone. Canada’s Trudeau, a WEF “young global leader,” has already spoken with airlines about introducing digital identity and [biometric travel documents](#). The WEF is anxious to make digital ID programs an integral part of the [worldwide financial services](#) and [travel industries](#).

This type of digital technology focus also infuses the United Nations. For example, the [United Nations International Telecommunication Union \(ITU\) will be meeting in Bucharest, Romania on September 26, 2022](#). The ITU, currently presided over by China’s Houlin Zhao, is one of 15 specialized agencies in the UN system working toward achieving the UN’s Sustainable Development Goals (which will also be addressed in a future post). In addition to creating a “roadmap for 2024-2027,” the ITU Conference sets out to be a “new benchmark for a green, gender-responsive, inclusive, and sustainable” gathering where ITU fosters “international cooperation to accelerate the world’s digital transformation.”

The ITU states it is “committed to connecting the world and promoting information and communication technologies for the good of all.” Except, a member of the Chinese Communist Party heads the committee, and they’re essentially talking about pushing the entire world into a digital tracking system. Whether you say “the good of all,” or “for the greater good,” it is the same. It’s a plan to negate the individual to meet the goals of the

collective, and is being driven by a small group of unelected billionaires and technocrats who think they know what's best for you.

Do you believe in the value of every individual? In freedom of thought and expression? Freedom of religion? Freedom of movement? Freedom to criticize your government? In short, do you believe in freedom to conduct your life in the manner you feel is best for you and yours? If you do, it's time to wake up before it's too late. The elites who wish to control and harm us cannot succeed if enough people refuse to cooperate. I'm not talking about refusing all advances in technology and stuffing your smart phone in your sock drawer, but absolutely I'm calling on people to unite against digital ID's and tracking systems.

Not feeling pain is a benefit of opiate use, but prolonged and addicted use of opiates destroys everything in a person's life. We must continually examine what is happening in the forefront of technology being offered to us, and pushed upon us. We must be willing to say no, and even forgo certain technologies, when we see that the risks and costs outweigh the convenience they might provide.

Reprinted from the author's [Substack](#).

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