



In the Absence of the Sacred: The Failure of Technology and the Survival of the Indian Nations

By Jerry Mander

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In his critically acclaimed *Four Arguments for the Elimination of Television*, author and social critic Jerry Mander proclaimed that television, by its fundamental nature, is dangerous—to personal health and sanity, to the environment, and to the democratic process. With *In the Absence of the Sacred*, he goes beyond television to critique our technological society as a whole. In this provocative work, Mander challenges the utopian promise of technological society and tracks its devastating impact on native cultures worldwide. The Western world's loss of a sense of the sacred in the natural world, he says, has led us toward global environmental disaster and social disorder—and worse lies ahead. Yet models for restoring our relationship with the Earth exist in the cultures of native peoples, whose values and skills have enabled them to survive centuries of invasion and exploitation. Far from creating paradise on Earth, technology has instead produced an unsustainable contest for resources. Mander surveys the major technologies shaping the “new world order”—computers, telecommunications, space exploration, genetic engineering, robotics, and the corporation itself—and warns that they are merging into a global mega-technology, with dire environmental and political results.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Urging that we come to a fuller understanding of the perils of technology, Mander examines the sociopolitical ramifications of innovations, focusing on the resistance of native peoples. A lively and provocative argument.

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From Library Journal

Mander's book is an angry protest against the uncritical adoption of technology, the expansion of capitalism, and the centralization of political power. He warns that these trends will lead to a New World Order dominated by multinational corporations, resulting in devastation of the earth's natural environment and native cultures. Mander argues that technologies like television and computers extend corporate control in society and promote the uncaring consumption of natural resources. To avoid imminent environmental catastrophe, he contends that we must adopt the values of Native American cultures that regard the earth as sacred. Mander, a former advertising executive, writes in compact, persuasive prose. His book reads like a series of essays. Recommended for academic and large public libraries.

- Randy J. Olsen, Brigham Young Univ. Lib., Provo, Ut.

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From Kirkus Reviews

A heartfelt plea to rethink the industrial world's alleged headlong rush to oblivion through its mad pursuit of technology. Mander, who conducts ad campaigns for nonprofit groups, expands greatly here on ideas he discussed in *Four Arguments for the Elimination of Television* (1978). Through clever manipulation of product images and relentless promotion of best-case scenarios, Mander says, Americans have been sold a bill of goods by corporate, government, and academic boosters of new technologies. Evidence of this pattern surfaces in several predominant technologies--computers, TV, genetic and molecular engineering--and in each case a negative side exists to blacken industry's rosy view. Provocatively claiming that society would be better off without computers of any kind, since they benefit the military and a Big Brother mentality far more than they meet individual needs, Mander argues that serious consideration of age-old native attitudes toward life and economics is the only viable cure for the cancer of megatechnology. Details of recent battles between corporate and native interests in Alaska, Nevada, Hopiland, Hawaii, and elsewhere--in which the author played an active part--make the point that the spiritual and social values of these native peoples continue to be attacked even as their perspective becomes more desperately needed. To critics who accuse him of romanticism, Mander counters: ``What is romantic is to believe that technological evolution will ever live up to its own advertising, or that technology itself can liberate us from the problems it has created.'' Wide-ranging and impassioned--an important reminder as the 500th anniversary of Columbus's ``discovery'' approaches that native traditions still live, and that they may be the last defense against rampant corporate greed. -- Copyright ©1991, Kirkus Associates, LP. All rights reserved.

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