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Organized Loneliness

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Abstract

The point of departure in this essay is Hannah Arendt's intriguing reference to "organized loneliness" at the end of *The Origins of Totalitarianism*. If loneliness is a unique experience of psychological suffering fundamental to human life, *organized* loneliness threatens our very existence for it systematizes the isolation produced by totalitarianism to suppress solidarity and action. I will argue that the concept of organized loneliness has never been more relevant, though its conditions have changed, and no one elaborates these conditions as effectively and urgently as Franco Berardi. Loneliness under "high–tech capitalism" is one of many psychosocial symptoms resulting from the erosion of empathy and sensitivity, social media–fed mass conformity, and the severe isolation caused by our competitive, precarious and flexible work environments. Bringing together the insights of these two remarkable thinkers will help us understand the danger — at once psychological, social and political — of our contemporary loneliness.

Keywords: Loneliness, totalitarianism, technology, capitalism, social media, Arendt, Berardi.

Philosophers do not often address the theme of loneliness. We may discover it between the lines of a philosophical work or speculate on the loneliness of its author, but as an experience worthy of philosophical reflection, loneliness rarely makes an appearance. Solitude is another matter; since thinking demands it, and since the thinker takes some pleasure in it, we should not be surprised that philosophers write moving tributes to solitude. Thinking about loneliness, however — that painful experience of feeling isolated from others whether one is alone or not — is generally left to the psychologists or the poets.

Two exceptions to this philosophical neglect are Hannah Arendt and Franco "Bifo" Berardi. In her remarkable conclusion to *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, Arendt makes a provocative reference to "organized loneliness." She is alluding to the systematization of an experience she believes is normally suffered in marginal circumstances like old age. Organized loneliness is systemic, produced by the isolation that twentieth–century totalitarian regimes cultivated so efficiently and effectively. Arendt warns that loneliness

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poses an ominous threat to our existence, a danger "considerably" worse than the powerlessness of those living under tyranny. As the "tool of terror," loneliness threatens to "ravage the world as we know it."[1]

More than half a century later Berardi picks up where Arendt left off, justifying her concerns over a ravaged world with his impassioned descriptions of the conditions and effects of contemporary loneliness. Ours is a loneliness arising not from totalitarian–induced isolation, but rather from the operation of our current digitalized version of advanced capitalism or "high–tech capitalism," to use Berardi's expression.[2] Loneliness is organized for us today through seamlessly interrelated phenomena: a competitive and precarious world of work, financial abstraction, new modes of communication, and the breakdown of social forms we rely on for care and conviviality. Berardi does not provide a sustained analysis of contemporary loneliness itself; it appears, rather, as one symptom in a long list of psychosocial symptoms that indicate our social body is ill. Loneliness, alienation, anxiety, depression, and panic, as well as the loss of empathy, meaningfulness, and a sense of belonging, indicate that high–tech capitalism is destroying the social landscape, bringing about an "anthropological mutation"[3] that appears irrevocable despite Berardi's occasional expressions of hope for new modes of resistance.

My objective in reading Arendt and Berardi together is to complicate the overly simplistic accounts of loneliness that have been making the headlines in recent years. The pundits proclaim that loneliness is our newest health crisis, responsible for an increase in illness, disease, and even early death, and prescribe facile remedies that tend to place the burden of loneliness on the lonely.[4] As one of the few contemporary philosophers to analyze loneliness bluntly asserts: "In many cases, it will be correct to say: you are not lonely because you are alone — you are alone because you are lonely."[5] When causes are sought, the loneliness experts fault social media, but there is little recognition of the complexity of the conditions and effects of loneliness, and of the structures that produce them.

1. Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1973), 478.

2. Franco "Bifo" Berardi, *And: Phenomenology of the End* (South Pasadena, CA: Semiotext(e), 2015), 110.

3. Berardi, *And*, 25.

4. Loneliness has been making the headlines since George Monbiot declared in a 2014 *Guardian* article that ours is "the age of loneliness," and it is killing us. See "The Age of Loneliness is Killing Us," *The Guardian*, October, 2014, https://www.theguardian.com. See also S. Pinker, *The Village Effect: How Face–to–Face Contact Can Make Us Healthier and Happier* (Toronto: Vintage Canada, 2015), and Judith Shulevitz, "The Lethality of Loneliness", *The New Republic*, May 13, 2013, https://newrepublic.com.

5. Lars Svendsen, *A Philosophy of Loneliness* (London, UK: Reaktion Books, 2017).

While loneliness may be fundamental to the human condition, as Arendt acknowledges — an ordinary experience common to all of us — it has structural causes that bring the social, political and psychological dimensions of life to bear on one another. To understand loneliness is to understand our very great need for one another, a need that Arendt and Berardi never fail to respect in their preoccupation with the question of how we are to live with one another in the continual process of recreating a shared world. It is a need that demands a wide spectrum of human togetherness, from political solidarity to neighborliness to intimate love. If we once did, we can no longer take for granted that if political solidarity fails us, we will be supported by social forms, or that if the psyche is injured, those same social forms will bring us back to life. If Berardi is right, we are facing a breakdown on all fronts, initiating the very ravaging of the world that Arendt worried would be the outcome of mass loneliness.

1. The Totalitarian Organization of Loneliness

We find Arendt's description of organized loneliness in the final chapter of *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, a chapter in which she analyzes the distinction between twentieth–century totalitarianism and other forms of tyranny. The distinction lies in the deadly combination of terror and the logic of ideology that we find in totalitarianism as opposed to tyranny. Having established that the essence of totalitarianism is terror, Arendt's objective at the end of this extraordinary political text is to locate the basic human experience that underlies totalitarianism.

Two distinct yet related human experiences play a crucial role in the operation of totalitarian domination and repression: isolation and loneliness. Isolation occurs in the political realm where it prevents solidarity and thus impedes political life since, for Arendt, politics is constituted by speaking and acting with one another. We cannot act when we are isolated from others because there is no one to act with us. Isolation thus leads to political impasse and impotence and may constitute, Arendt suggests, "the beginning of terror." At the very least, isolation is the most "fertile ground" for terror, and always its result.[6] Tyrants know that isolation is a crucial instrument for domination, turning one person against another by cultivating and rewarding fear and suspicion; family member turns against family member, neighbor against neighbor. An entire population may be isolated — "prepared for elimination," to borrow a phrase from Étienne Balibar.[7]

6. Arendt, *Origins*, 474.

7. Étienne Balibar, "Difference, Otherness, Exclusion," *Parallax* 11, 1 (2005): 19–34, 32. Emphasis in the original.

But isolation is not yet loneliness. As an anti–political experience, isolation prevents the action that solidarity initiates, but it does not prevent a private sphere of friendship and intimacy. We can be alone and isolated without being lonely and, conversely, we can be lonely without being isolated. In fact, Arendt claims that we need some isolation, a space between us that permits the individuality of thinking and experience, that gives rise to the separateness necessary for pluralism.[8] Isolation in this sense has productive capacities — the artist creates, the philosopher thinks, when isolated from others. This is the kinder version of aloneness that we might prefer to call solitude. Any suffering that accompanies solitude would be balanced by the meaningfulness of creative expression.

While isolation has to do with political existence, since it prevents pluralism and collective action, Arendt stipulates that loneliness has to do with our social existence; it concerns human life as a whole[9] and is, in fact, part of the human condition even if it is an "inhuman" experience. Loneliness means, for Arendt, that "I as a person feel myself deserted by all human companionship." I no longer belong to a world; abandoned to myself, I feel uprooted and superfluous.[10] I am even deserted by myself — the self to whom I speak when I am alone thinking, engaged in a silent dialogue. Arendt refers to this thinking self as the "two–in–one"; when I think, I am still *with* myself, and therefore also with others in some sense, for the dialogue I carry on with myself when I am alone does not lose contact with the world of others. These others are represented in the "other self" to whom I speak when I am thinking.[11]

The suffering of loneliness is thus caused by a combination of losses. Abandoned by others, we lose the affirmation of a self, for every self needs to be confirmed through others. Arendt believes that the "saving grace" of companionship is that it rescues us from the sameness of a singular voice; friendship saves us from being imprisoned within a self.[12] Loneliness is unbearable, therefore, not only because we lose others, but also because we lose the self that is in relation to others, and this in turn leads to the loss of a world. All at once, therefore, we lose a self, a world, and the capacity for thought and experience that the world offers to us.[13] Arendt concludes that loneliness is the experience of "not belonging to the world at all, which is

8. Arendt, *Origins*, 474–75.

9. Arendt, *Origins*, 475.

10. Arendt, *Origins*, 474–75.

11. Arendt, *Origins*, 476. For her extended discussion of the "two–in–one"; see Hannah Arendt, *The Life of the Mind*, (New York: Harcourt, 1971), 179–193.

12. Arendt, *Origins*, 476.

13. Arendt, *Origins*, 477.

among the most radical and desperate experiences of man."[14] She reinforces the extreme nature of this suffering later in *The Human Condition* when she claims that "loneliness is so contradictory to the human condition of plurality that it is simply unbearable for any length of time."[15] The question for Arendt's contemporary readers is whether we are learning to adapt to this contradiction.

It is worth noting that, for Arendt, there is only one mental process that has no need of the self, the other, or the world, and that is logical reasoning, the kind that supports the ideology of totalitarianism. Ideology itself was not responsible for preparing the victims and executioners required by totalitarianism, but rather the "inherent logicality" of the ideology, an "irresistible force," as Stalin had called it, more powerful than the *idea* of ideology.[16] Submitting to an endless process of logical calculation means, for Arendt, that we surrender our freedom to begin something absolutely new, which is the condition for all action, as well as our freedom to think.[17] To this, Berardi will add that logicality admits no empathy.

The simplest demand of the lonely is thus: *I want to be a part of the world*. I want to be known, understood, visible, reflected back to myself, but I also want to exist *for* others *in* the world in order for my life to be meaningful. Already we see how the psychological, the social, and the political bleed into one another when we reflect on loneliness. Though it is experienced individually, loneliness is never merely an interior experience. The lonely person, for all her inner suffering, bears witness to the failure of the social, a failure that is politically expedient. But this expediency remains hidden; the organization of loneliness — its seamless production — masks both its political usefulness and the social failure that led to it.

Arendt explains the unique relationship between loneliness and terror under totalitarian regimes in her description of the "iron band of terror," necessary for turning isolation into loneliness. The iron band of terror presses individuals together so tightly that movement ceases, along with the possibility for action. The space between people — essential for the pluralistic give and take of public life — is eliminated. Paradoxically, the iron band also destroys human togetherness; in pressing individuals into an undifferentiated mass, it smothers human interaction.[18] As a result, the experience of the materially and sensually given world of those subjected to totalitarian rule is stunted. Arendt believes that we can trust our sensual

14. Arendt, *Origins*, 475.

15. Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1958), 76.

16. Joseph Stalin, *Speech of January 28*, 1924; quoted in V. Lenin, *Selected Works*, vol. I, 33, Moscow 1947; quoted in Arendt, *Origins*, 472.

17. Arendt, *Origins*, 472–73.

18. Arendt, *Origins*, 465–66.

experience only because we are pluralistic, we share a common sense without which we would be enclosed in our own particularity, in an unreliable and treacherous individual sense data.[19] The iron band of terror destroys this shared common sense.

Loneliness thus paves the road to totalitarian rule by preparing human beings for domination, replacing thinking with logical ideology, and preventing our common sensual experience of the world. Once relatively uncommon, under totalitarianism loneliness becomes "an everyday experience" of the masses.[20] Its destruction is twofold — eliminating the space between us, so vital for political life, and eliminating the human togetherness so vital for social and psychic life. In the totalitarian organization of loneliness, the borders that separate the political from the social and the social from the psychological begin to dissolve. We are left in a desert world, Arendt concludes, "a world where nobody is reliable and nothing can be relied upon," where sand storms threaten to devastate all parts of the inhabited earth.[21] The real danger is not the desert itself, for Arendt maintains we are human precisely because we suffer in desert conditions, but when we begin to feel at home in one.[22]

2. The Iron Band of Technology

Berardi also makes use of a desert analogy in his diagnosis of the human condition in our own times. Perhaps no one else expounds as powerfully the "desertification"[23] of the human landscape, brought about by dramatic changes in the way we work, communicate, and live together under digitalized capitalism. The desertification of our social terrain is the ravaging of the world in process, characterized by a mutation — from an "alphabetical" to a digital infosphere — that is sweeping in its effects.[24]

The mutation is constituted by a transition from a "conjunctive" to a "connective" mode of relating to one another. Conjunction occurs through empathy. When we conjoin, we become other to ourselves, understanding another's emotions and experiences as though they were our own. Conjunction leads to a meaningful exchange that engenders something new;

19. Arendt, *Origins*, 475–76.
20. Arendt, *Origins*, 478.
21. Arendt, *Origins*, 478.
22. Hannah Arendt, *The Promise of Politics*, ed. Jerome Kohn (New York: Schocken Books, 2005), 201.
23. Berardi, *And*, 110.
24. Berardi, *And,* 11.

we become something we were not before the exchange.[25] It is therefore "a creative act" as each conjunctive relation begins an "infinite number of constellations" that do not follow a pre–conceived pattern.[26] When we communicate in a conjunctive mode, we interpret another's meaning within the context of a particular interaction; we are attentive to our interlocutor's intention, to what is left unsaid, and to the implications of the interaction.[27] The body is fully present in conjunctive relations, attended by sensibility and sensitivity, emotion and empathic understanding.

Connection, on the other hand, is a purely functional mode of relating, "a product of the logical mind"[28] that does not involve empathic understanding. The understanding that occurs through connection is another sort altogether, based on "compliance and adaptation to a syntactic structure."[29] Nothing new is created out of connection, singularities remain separate, their interaction useful but not meaningful. We acknowledge a sequence and carry out what it asks of us; it is a "punctual" and "repeatable" exchange of "algorithmic functions" that relies on precise rules of behavior.[30] In connection, there are no nuances or intentions that we can actually detect, thus no ambiguity in the exchange.[31] What remains is only "the logic of connection"[32] — not logic in the service of totalitarian ideology, but in the service of the efficient interactions characteristic of high–tech capitalism. Berardi here echoes Arendt's two concerns: the substitution of thinking and the freedom to act for logical, cognitive processes, and the loss of common sensual experience.

When we reflect on our everyday interactions with others since the invention of the smartphone, data plans, and social media, "mutation" seems an accurate designation. That digital technology is affecting our social relations is obvious. Without the nuance that face–to–face encounters provide, we rely on emojis, caps, likes, and swipes to express ourselves. Alternatively, with increasing ease we simply refuse the exchange, remaining deaf and mute before the other. This mode of "connective" relating inevitably creeps into our face–to–face interactions: heightened rage over minor irritations, the summary dismissal of a stranger based on a look or gesture, and everyday acts of discourtesy, as thoughtless as a swipe left. The result is what we might expect. With the erosion of empathy, sensibility, and affect,

25. Berardi, *And*, 14–18.
26. Berardi, *And,* 13.
27. Berardi, *And,* 23.
28. Berardi, *And,* 15.
29. Berardi, *And,* 18.
30. Berardi, *And*, 22–23.
31. Berardi, *And*, 23.
32. Berardi, *And*, 15.

the ability to understand the complexity of another's comportment and communication is crippled.

More broadly, the internet binds millions of users together, demanding conformity through political loyalties, virtue–signaling, shared indignation, and the production of identical desires. This demand is perhaps our contemporary variant of Arendt's "iron band of terror" — in this case an "iron band of technology." While fear forced individuals to submit to the iron band of terror, the promise of pleasure invites us to submit to the iron band of technology. In fact, we willingly offer up our privacy and individuality for the recognition and popularity the internet offers us, and for the convenience of online shopping or social connection without commitment. At the same time that we are pressed together, we are pulled apart; our bodies and material needs invisible to one another, we are slowly forgetting the meaning of solidarity, community, and perhaps even friendship. The frustrated longing to belong when there is nothing to belong to leads to a "nostalgic desire for an identity that never really existed in the first place" — a starting point for identity–based violence.[33]

It would be reductive to attribute the organization of loneliness solely to the connective mode of relating instituted by technology. Berardi's work never fails to show the tandem development of capitalism and technology. The anthropological mutation we are witnessing due to digital technologies occurs in a wider context of "capitalist absolutism" whose effects are already apparent in the environment, social welfare, education, the economy, and in the impotence of social movements to reverse these effects. What resistance is possible when solidarity has been eroded, the consequence of increasing competition and productivity, and "an endless intensification of the rhythms of work?"[34]

There are no bodies in charge, nobody is making decisions; in a system of financial abstraction that is founded on "the faceless operativity of automatisms," Berardi states, only the algorithm of capital is growing, independently of the will of its owners.[35]

We are left in a desert, in a "factory of unhappiness" that generates rising rates of loneliness, anxiety, depression, and suicide, all desperate attempts to adapt to desert life or admit defeat.[36] And terror? It is not a stretch to note the connection between isolation and the mass killer who carries out his murderous plan alone. The twenty–first century version of loneliness

33. Berardi, *And*, 67–68.

34. Berardi, *And*, 296–97.

35. Berardi, *And*, 338.

36. Franco "Bifo" Berardi, *"In the lonely cockpit of our lives" – Franco "Bifo" Berardi on the Germanwings Crash*, Verso Blog, April 2, 2015, https://www.versobooks.com.

operating as the tool of terror is not mass terror carried out by a totalitarian state purging its peoples of an imagined enemy, but the terror of the lonely, armed man, bereft of a world, uprooted and superfluous, deserted even by the interlocutor of his silent dialogue with himself.

3. At Home in the Desert

We could be realizing Arendt's worst fear: that we will feel at home in the desert and adapt to the loss of a pluralistic world, a self, creative thinking and acting. Or as Berardi would add, we may adjust to a disembodied life without empathy, affect, or sensitivity to one another, and to a world in which the *soul* is put to work.[37] Even a cursory sketch of what this adjustment looks like reveals the ambiguity of our responses to the contemporary organization of loneliness.

We could begin with work. For the vast majority, work is now characterized by various degrees of flexibility, precarity, and competition. The content of much of this work is largely cognitive; we are "cognitarians," to use Berardi's designation, not proletarians, putting our minds to work while our bodies remain passively tethered to desks and screens, with the exception of our fingers, tapping on keyboards.[38] Our work is not left at the end of the day since we can bring it with us anywhere. We appreciate this convenience — we often choose it, in fact — but it comes with a cost. Flexibility and competition mean that we do not congregate often or easily. We lose a specific *workplace* social form of interaction that we may not realize we need until we are without it.

The real estate agent, for example, whose paper work is now exclusively digital, laments having no office to go to; she misses having to leave home for another place, chatting with fellow agents over a morning coffee after hanging up her coat and checking her mailbox. The young NGO worker who only meets his busy co–workers once a week for two hours spends the remainder of the week in complete isolation, perhaps mystified by the source of his feelings of emptiness, because this is all that he knows. Cafés are crammed with office–deprived startups avoiding the isolation of working at home. Their baristas are lonely, working in the library–silence of these once lively public spaces. Without a common space to inhabit,

37. Franco Berardi outlines a new kind of alienation, characterized by the demand of post–Fordist cognitive labor processes for the mental, affective, and relational energies of workers (their "souls") that were never historically required for physical labour. See Franco "Bifo" Berardi, *The Soul at Work: From Alienation to Autonomy*, trans. Francesca Cadel and Giuseppina Mecchia (South Pasadena, CA: Semiotext(e) 2009).

38. Berardi, *The Soul at Work*, 74.

we no longer experience the unique social interaction of the workplace. However fraught with personality clashes, office politics, or banal chitchat, the workplace offers us a space — imperfect and idiosyncratic — to which we belong. It demands our bodily presence and our civility.

Isolation occurs by design — material segregation produces psychic segregation. In academic institutions, for example, disciplinary silos are created and cultivated by competition for funds and recognition. As enrolments and administrative positions rise, space is at a premium, and common rooms for human interaction are low priority. Even if we had such rooms, we would need the time and inclination to use them. Lunch is no longer a break from work but an accompaniment to email time, "eating al desko" as a recent *Guardian* article put it.[39] Increasing levels of course management tasks and the flexibility to carry them out anywhere with internet access mean that we work in our offices as little as possible. On the surface, the effect on students seems negligible, as face–to–face discussions are considered more of an inconvenience than an opportunity.

The isolation of students is evident in their reluctance — or perhaps inability — to form groups for discussion in a classroom. When asked to do so, many sit alone and pull out their cell phones. They are unwilling to raise dissenting opinions, as though there is an unspoken agreement that disagreement is offensive. The students' resistance to thinking on their own is fostered by the social pressure to succeed when the odds are not in their favor. The belief in their own singular gifts and future promise falters in the face of the unforgiving, competitive environment that society has cultivated throughout their childhoods. The relentless pressure to achieve when only a few will be rewarded is surely the source of rising rates of anxiety and psychological breakdown in our student populations. The iron band is in evidence here, destroying the space between them through a conformity that stifles individual thought, and at the same time, destroying human togetherness.

The more we work, the less time we have to be together with others, and the less we are together with others, the more we fall back on work to fill our time. Work becomes life, evident in our obsession with agendas and to–do lists, and life outside work diminishes. As Berardi puts it, "we renew our affection for work because economic survival becomes more difficult and daily life becomes lonely and tedious."[40] For many, work is what we do because there is no one with whom we can do something other than work.

The more impoverished our social life becomes due to work commitments, the more we demand from our intimate others. Coupledom, and

39. Phil Daoust, "The new rules of eating al desko," *The Guardian*, January 10, 2019, https://www.theguardian.com.

40. Berardi, *The Soul at Work*, 83.

the nuclear or extended family for those who still have one, provide a psychosocial lifeboat; default social units from which we expect care, financial advantage, and in the best of cases, emotional support, companionship, and a "witness" to our daily existence.[41] But given this social unit monopolizes care and social interaction, the family is profoundly *anti–social*, as Michèle Barrett and Mary McIntosh argue, "a place of intimacy" that "has made the outside world cold and friendless." If we cling to the myth of couple love and the promise of family happiness it is because they are the only options for survival in a harsh social environment; the family is an ideal that renders everything else "pale and unsatisfactory."[42] In this respect, we could argue that the family plays a critical role in the organization of loneliness, but its desirability obscures this role.

Despite this desirability, we are witnessing global declines in marriage, coupledom (cohabiting or not), and childbirth, and a corresponding rise in solo living, especially in urban centers. This does not necessarily mean loneliness is on the rise, but some solo dwellers are affected more than others. The family obligations Barrett and McIntosh allude to are weakening; the elderly are ill with no one to care for them but an elderly spouse if they are lucky, and some are dying alone with no one to notice. When these dead are found, weeks, months, or even years after their lonely deaths, cleaning companies arrive to clear out the maggots and make the apartment habitable again. In one estimate, there are some 30,000 such deaths in Japan each year.[43]

These are random examples of the everyday evidence of our ambivalent adaptations to organized loneliness. When Berardi alludes to another case from Japan, the phenomenon of an extreme self–imposed isolation on the part of vast numbers of (mostly) men, he argues that it must be viewed not merely as the symptom of a psychosocial pathology, but as a form of adjustment. These recluses, called *hikikomori*, are responding "to the unbearable stress of competition, mental exploitation, and precarity"[44] by withdrawing completely from society, rarely leaving their homes, giving up work, and relying on families for financial support. There are hundreds of thousands of such cases living in total isolation for months, years or even decades. Berardi claims this is "a fully understandable withdrawal from hell."[45]

If we feel a certain horror in hearing of this abject isolation and loneliness, self–imposed or resisted, we may conclude that it is reasonable to designate

41. Sheila Heti, "My Life is a Joke," *The New Yorker*, May 11, 2015, https://www.newyorker.com.

42. Michèle Barrett and Mary McIntosh, *The Anti–social Family* (New York: Verso Press, 2015), 77, 79–80.

43. Anna Fifield, "Cleaning up after the dead," *The Washington Post*, January 24, 2018, https://www.washingtonpost.com.

44. Berardi, *And*, 104.

45. Berardi, *And*, 105.

loneliness as the basic experience underlying high–tech capitalism, just as Arendt called loneliness the fundamental experience of totalitarianism. But the challenge in responding to the devastation of our social landscape arises from the fact that we lie in a bed we have made — that we have chosen and continue to choose — and now we are learning to adapt. The difference between the iron band of terror and the iron band of technology is choice. We choose efficiency, independence, and convenience because we *can* now in ways we never could before. Loneliness is the price we pay for the freedom of nobody bothering us. This is the implication of Berardi's description of the double meaning of being American (though this seems unreasonably exclusive), which includes, on the one hand, the feeling of freedom when walking in a city where no one bothers us and, on the other, "a sense of loneliness, and the impoverishment of shared sensibility."[46] It follows that to resist organized loneliness we must accept inconvenience, we must allow ourselves to be bothered by others. This means that solidarity, friendship, courtesy, and care, no longer taken for granted, will become forms of resistance.

The answer to how we might prevent the organization of loneliness is both obvious and elusive. Obvious because human togetherness is the antithesis of loneliness, and many of us still know what it means to be close to others; elusive because when loneliness is organized — when it becomes systemic, the new normal — we may forget that it has an antithesis.

46. Berardi, *And*, 70.