

TECHNOLOGICAL CONSPIRACIES:  
COMTE, TECHNOLOGY, AND SPIRITUAL  
DESPOTISM

ABSTRACT: *While there have been numerous critiques of the ideology of technology, it is useful to situate technology within both a liberal and a conspiratorial framework. The early work of Auguste Comte offers an ideal vehicle for this kind of analysis. Liberalism's embrace of technology is developed in Comte to produce a theory of scientific and technical elites intent on reinventing society and the individual. This "technological conspiracy" reads very much like elements of a Silicon Valley manifesto describing the cyber-utopia of a near tomorrow. For these reasons Comte is relevant to a discussion of conspiracy today.*

Keywords: *Comte; conspiracies; Internet; technology.*

It is not immediately obvious that there is a good fit between technology and conspiracy. Technology is generally regarded as "neutral" and, in the case of Internet technologies, as an overwhelmingly positive or benevolent force. In fact, technology is often seen as a liberating tool against the conspiratorial and unnecessarily secretive "networks" of autocratic states (Schmidt and Cohen 2014).

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