

Technology & Ethos  
Vol. 2 Book of Life  
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Machines (as Norbert Weiner said) are an extension of their inventor-creators. That is not simple once you think. Machines, the entire technology of the West, is just that, the technology of the West.

Nothing has to look or function the way it does. The West man's freedom, unscientifically got at the expense of the rest of the world's people, has allowed him to expand his mind—spread his sensibility wherever it could go, & so shaped the world, & its powerful artifact-engines.

Political power is also the power to create—not only what you will—but to be freed to go where ever you can go—(mentally physically as well). Black creation—creation powered by the Black ethos brings very special results,

Think of yourself, Black creator, freed of European restraint which first means the restraint of self determined mind development. Think what would be the results of the unfettered Black inventor-creator with the resources of a nation behind him. To imagine—to think—to construct—to energize!!!

How do you communicate with the great masses of Black people? How do you use the earth to feed masses of people? How do you cure illness? How do you prevent illness? What are the Black purposes of space travel?

It staggers the mind. To be free go let the mind do what it will as constructive progress force, availed of the total knowledge resource energy of a nation.

These white scientists on lifetime fellowships, or pondering problems at Princeton's Institute For Advanced Study.

So that a telephone is one culture's solution to the problem of sending words through space. It is political power that has allowed this technology to emerge, & seem the sole direction for the result desired.

A typewriter?—why should it only make use of the tips of the fingers as contact points of flowing multi directional creativity. If I invented a word placing machine, an “expression-scriber,” if you will, then I would have a kind of instrument into which I could step & sit or sprawl or hang & use not only my fingers to make words express feelings but elbows, feet, head, behind, and all the sounds I wanted, screams, grunts, taps, itches, I'd have magnetically recorded, at the same time, & translated into word—or perhaps even the final expressed thought/feeling would not be merely word or sheet, but itself, the expression, three dimensional—able to be touched, or tasted or felt, or entered, or heard or carried like a speaking singing constantly communicating charm. A typewriter is corny!!

The so called fine artist realizes, those of us who have freed ourselves, that our creations need not emulate the white man's, but it is time the engineers, architects, chemists, electronics craftsmen, ie film too, radio, sound, &c., that learning western technology must not be the end of our understanding of the particular discipline we're involved in. Most of that west shaped information is like mud and sand when you're panning for gold!

The actual beginnings of our expression are post Western (just as they certainly are pre-western). It is only necessary that we arm ourselves with complete self knowledge the whole technology (which is after all just expression of who ever) will change to reflect the essence of a freed people. Freed of an oppressor, but also as Touré has reminded we must be "free from the oppressor's spirit," as well. It is this spirit as emotional construct that can manifest as expression as art or technology or any form.

But what is our spirit, what will it project? What machines will it produce? What will they achieve? What will be their morality? Check the different morality of the Chinese birthday celebration firecracker & the white boy's bomb. Machines have the morality of their inventors.

See everything fresh and "without form"—then make forms that will express us truthfully and totally and by this certainly free us eventually.

The new technology must be spiritually oriented because it must aspire to raise man's spirituality and expand man's consciousness. It must begin by being "humanistic" though the white boy has yet to achieve this. Witness a technology that kills both plants & animals, poisons the air & degenerates or enslaves man.

The technology itself must represent human striving. It must represent at each point the temporary perfection of the evolutionary man. And be obsolete only because nothing is ever perfect, the only constant is change.

Amiri Baraka  
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