



The New Gonzo Journal

Should We Have Connected?

Social media didn't just connect us - it removed the social cost of speech...

Another night, struggling to remain asleep.

Suffering again from too much input. Circuits fried. Wired in.

It's 0112 & I do what we all do in this fourth industrial age - reach for my smartphone, hoping a casual scroll through my "for you" page will ease me back into slumber. This proves fruitless, of course, thanks to the effects of blue light. That seemingly innocent effervescent glow hums through the darkness to become static behind my eyes - my nervous system firing up, urging engagement.

Blue light isn't as harmless as it seems. It interferes with our circadian rhythm - the internal twenty-four-hour clock that tells the body when to shut down. Specialised retinal cells - the ones that don't help you see but regulate time - register that glow, suppressing melatonin and halting the drop in core temperature. Alertness failing to soften.

In short, my brain is now wired to think daylight has arrived..

My system attempts a power down, but I'm forcing its next update earlier than required, before a proper cool down. Health benefits gained from sleep become the sacrifice. No REM tonight as I lie, head on my corner of the bed - worshipping my new tech religion.

This little rectangle of constant connection exposes my lack of will power. Despite attempts to resist, I feel the pull more often. A rush of dopamine loaded with satisfaction. Like a teenager taking a first drag on a cigarette, repeating the exercise hoping to hit the same high - today it's TikTok.

Satisfaction wanes rapidly as I watch strangers tear each other apart. Empathy and kindness eroding with each reply. Adrenaline spikes as I scroll deeper, feeling the corrosive nature of others' interactions boiling my blood to acid.

I don't want to preach that social media is "evil" - far from it. I share the same nostalgia many of my generation feel. Reflections of 2006, logging into Myspace to find that first friend in Tom - agonising over which song to introduce your digital self, selecting the right photo, all dripping with teen angst. Back then, the biggest online drama felt siloed to who was unhappy about not being number one in your top eight friends - a digital ranking that mimicked, but never replaced, real-world connection.

Social media in its infancy felt smaller. Contained. Human. Connection with geography.

As decades moved forward, something changed. Outrage became currency. Rage baiters became experts at procuring clicks, algorithms became overseers. Advertising became more prevalent, personalised based on conversations you thought were private - Thought Police, except wearing Amazon or Temu uniforms...

Platforms that aim to share positivity exist, but toxicity wins. It works like mainstream news - the more horrors shown, the more you lock in to boost ratings - instead of stories of Scouts reading to elders. By 2026, starved for attention, these platforms pumped material we'd find it too hard to turn away from:

Racism

Violence

Abuse

Bloodshed

War

An endless tide of unfiltered nastiness and bad craziness, once hidden on the dark web, but now easily accessible.

Each era of social media intensifies our emotional state, with political and theological temperature rising. Facebook normalised social judgment with a single button. TikTok accelerated micro-tribes thriving on popularity, feeding our desperate need to feel relevant. Existential overload contained in an echo chamber.

Then Twitter - once a strong Myspace-vibe without music - became X. A political battleground riddled with propaganda and misinformation. Elon Musk, after purchasing Twitter, positioned himself as a crusader for "Free Speech" - minus the liberation of discourse, instead introducing deregulation - a new paradox for humanity to navigate.

Free speech originally fought institutional gatekeepers and tyrants, to ensure that speech remained free from restraint. X does not uphold that principle. Thoughts once restrained by social cost now amplify limitlessly. Commentators and activists proudly proclaim themselves Nazis - then cite free speech as justification.

Hate speech is free. The bill lands elsewhere.

Free to say, yet costly to endure.

It's sobering to see a species with such potential reduced to opinion identities. Facts hold less weight than emotional controversy. Social media slowly convinces us that facts and opinions are one and the same - dependent on what insecure,

desperate agendas bad actors push. Performance becomes the way to gain affirmation, whether infamy or fame, so long as attention, followers, clicks, and monetisation follow.

One day, these individuals may realise connection without character is chaos. Humanity built the most advanced communication network ever seen - something our ancestors could never imagine. Yet, while upgrading the network, we forgot to upgrade the people destined to use it.

I remain cautiously optimistic we'll stop doom scrolling and realise connection isn't the enemy. It's those who govern how the blue lights and algorithms shape our attention. Architects of these platforms incentivised by our outrage, yet we continue to reward them with engagement. Platforms may be free, but when you use them without paying - it is you that is the product.

The question pivots: it isn't whether we should have connected - but whether we still have a remaining semblance of decency to do it meaningfully. I hope we figure this out - for my daughter and all our children. Watching her sleep, I wonder what version of us she'll inherit.

Ultimately, remember the importance of real-world connections. Their awkwardness, with friction that emboldens us to improve and imbues emotional intelligence. Eyes to stare into, eyebrows to speak when words fail, arms flailing as we draw energy from one another. Real life conversations carry accountability. It's time these platforms remembered that.

What would happen if we simply turned off? Not forever. Just long enough to remember ourselves...

Doc

Editor's note: The good doctor of new age Gonzo Journalism drafted this piece in his notebook in a hotel restaurant, whilst on a business trip. The room was full of solitary individuals, sat at separate tables, missing their tribes. Each face faintly lit by blue light from their private screens, with not a word spoken.