



“Using relaxation to stop feeling angry is misguided. It’s targeting a symptom, not Steven Laurent”

Experts



Greening the Media

How media technology contributes to the global ecological crisis.

by Richard Maxwell, Ph.D. and Toby Miller, Ph.D.

A Consumer’s Question While Texting

Apple bends more than its latest smart phone.

Published on October 2, 2014 by Richard Maxwell, Ph.D. and Toby Miller, Ph.D. in Greening the Media

5 Like • 4 0 Tweet g+1 Share email

Sick of the iPhone 6? We don’t blame you. Their bendy phone PR was wonderful for their bottom line, as demonstrated by the sale of 10 million of the things in a weekend.¹ And if you tried to call a US phone company to have your service restored (as one of us did), you would have spent 90 minutes on hold waiting in the queue while iPhone 6 wannabes hogged the lines. If that happens to you, we recommend that you keep on hand *Consumer Reports’* photos of shattered phones to help you unleash your inner anti-technologist.²

“Bendgate” may have been a fabrication, a tempest in a telephone, but the frenzy and fuss over the new device and its nerdy flaws served, once again, to rescue Apple from facing unflattering facts that lurk beneath the surface.

We’ve been here before. When the iPhone 5 came out in 2012—and (yawn) five million were sold in the first three days—we were worried, as we wrote in a column at the time, that Apple’s marketing magic was also propagating a weird kind of religion that offered us transcendence from the gadget’s filthy industrial origins. So we detailed some of the environmental and labor issues that continue to dog the high-priests of style and marketing in Cupertino to this day.³

Related Links

- [Are You Too Lazy to Complain?](#)
- [Invasion of the Pods](#)
- [False Identity: Generally Recognized As Safe](#)
- [Learning about Labels](#)
- [Are Mac Owners Really Cooler Than PC Users?](#)

But Apple has other green problems that involve the color of money and a little place called Knocknaheeny, a suburb of Cork, Ireland, where Apple’s European headquarters are located.

Joaquín Almunia, a Vice-President and the outgoing commissioner of competition at the European Union (EU), delivered a new report from the European Commission that accuses Apple of cleansing profits in Ireland by avoiding taxation that would be due in other EU countries where its manufacturing, sales, and stockholders happen. And it’s doing this via a massive state subsidy, which the report suggests involved the illegal payment of millions from Irish taxpayers to bloat Apple’s already wondrous profits.⁴

In the US, that supposedly grand defender of private enterprise, Senator Rand Paul, has waded in to defend Apple as Senators Carl Levin and John McCain mounted a powerful case querying the tiny percentages that the corporation pays in taxes and how American taxpayers are the poorer for it.⁵

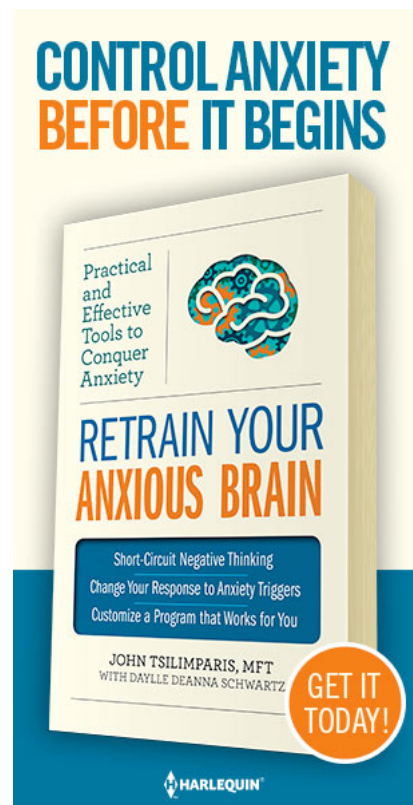
As consumers, these matters of political economy might seem quite foreign to our experience of the device. Such controversy is like a distant land where




Richard Maxwell, Ph.D., is Professor and Chair of Media Studies at Queens College, City University of New York. **Toby Miller, Ph.D.**, is an interdisciplinary social scientist. [more...](#)

Subscribe to Greening the Media

[Subscribe via RSS](#)



Greening the Media Recent Posts

 [Apple bends more than its latest smart phone.](#)

[The alternative is free, friendly, and green](#)

[Being green isn't easy, especially for](#)

Find a
Search for a
mental
City or Zip
near you.

Find Local:
Acupuncturists
Chiropractors
Massage
Therapists
City or Zip
and more.

rare species of politicians and policy wonks matter on about trade and such things as Apple's tax mischief. Let them knock themselves out, while we work out a payment plan for a new iPhone and share videos of it bending and of demonstrations of the fancy new operating system and apps.

But this political economy is in reality very close to home. Apple's shenanigans should matter to us as consumers who want to pay a price based on competition between providers rather than distortions through favoritism by governments. It should also matter to us as citizens and workers.

We all play different and sometimes contradictory roles, as parents, cooks, coaches, failures, professors, retirees, authors, marxists, republicans, liberals, luddites, and so on. These various positions both arise from and encourage a commensurately wide array of beliefs, commitments, and experiences. Cultural theorists sometimes call this feature of modern life "multiple subject positions." And helping to demarcate these positions are things like phones and fashion choices that become integral to our ideas of who we are.

So when we occupy the position of an iPhone customer it's easy to forget the worker's or citizen's perspectives of its industrial origins, its manufacturing, legal status, and environmental impact. We forget for the moment those links to our lives as we pursue the magic and pleasure of consumption. And in that forgetting, large parts of our history are left out.

The noted playwright, dramaturge and poet Bertolt Brecht, who wrote lyrics to "Mack the Knife," "The Alabama Song," and "Surabaya-Jonny," produced a moving paean to worker creativity, "A Worker's Question While Reading," on just this topic.⁷

Brecht's question concerned those who are left out of history, even as they worked to shape it, and excluded from written records. Brecht's poem juxtaposes leading figures of conventional history with a query about those who enabled their successes but are forgotten. He asks: "Every 10 years a great man. Who paid the bill?"

What, we wondered, would "A Consumer's Question While Texting" reveal about what happens beyond the subject position of the consummate consumer of iThings. "Every two years a new model. Who paid the bill?"

Depending on what the Europeans determine, Apple could be liable for back taxes of millions of name-your-currency. The process will take a long time. And companies like Apple like to spend money in litigation. So we shan't know the final story for a while, and the final story may be shrouded in a backroom deal. For now, we can question Apple's hazy, lazy, crazy, perhaps even bendable, notion of truth.

1. <http://www.theguardian.com/technology/2014/sep/25/apple-response-bend-iphone6-6p-plus-nine-complaints>; <http://forums.verizon.com/t5/My-Verizon-Account-Residential/I-hate-Verizon/td-p/714890>
2. <http://www.consumerreports.org/cro/news/2014/09/consumer-reports-tests-iphone-6-bendgate/index.htm>
3. <http://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/greening-the-media/201210/com...>
4. http://ec.europa.eu/commission_2010-2014/almunia/index_en.htm;

non-white Americans.






They're useful, but none address our biggest climate challenge.

A strange twist in the American psyche revolves around the politics of personal

More of Greening the Media blog

Most Popular



Most Read | Most Emailed

- 1  **Internet Trolls Are Narcissists, Psychopaths, and Sadists**
by Jennifer Golbeck, Ph.D.
- 2  **How to Tell a Sociopath from a Psychopath**
by Scott A. Bonn, Ph.D.
- 3  **How Boring Are You?**
by Marty Nemko, Ph.D.
- 4  **How Distorted Thinking Increases Stress and Anxiety**
by Toni Bernhard, J.D.
- 5  **6 Signs of Narcissism You May Not Know About**
by Leon F. Seltzer, Ph.D.

http://ec.europa.eu/competition/state_aid/cases/253200/253200_1582634_87_2.pdf;
<http://www.businessinsider.com/apples-dominion-over-city-of-cuper...>

5. <http://www.nationaljournal.com/tech/sen-levin-blasts-apple-for-abusing-sweetheart-tax-deal-with-ireland-20140930>
6. <http://www.marxists.org/subject/art/literature/brecht/>

Have a comment? [Start the discussion here!](#)

	Depressed? How to choose a therapist		Facing the stigma of schizophrenia
---	--	---	--

[Subscribe to Psychology Today](#) now and get a free issue!

Current Issue



Just Say It
When and how should we open up to loved ones?

[MORE FROM ISSUE ARCHIVES](#)
[SUBSCRIBE](#)

Follow Psychology Today: [Twitter](#) [Facebook](#) [Google+](#)

Psychology Today

© Copyright
1991-2014
Sussex
Publishers, LLC

[The Therapy Directory](#) [HealthPros.com](#)

[BuildingPros.com](#)

© Copyright 2002-2014 Sussex Directories, Inc.

[About/Contact](#) [Therapy Directory Index](#)
[Privacy](#) [Healthpros](#)
[Policy](#) [Index](#)
[Site](#) [Buildingpros](#)
[Help/Custom](#) [Index](#)
[Service](#)
[Terms of Use](#)