

SUBVERSIVE TECHNOLOGY

Breaking the rules

How technology can, instead of separating us, bring us together

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in Cuernavaca, Mexico

Technology is neither an unqualified evil nor an unqualified good—it is the tightrope that suspends cultures between nature and the gods. For man, the most vulnerable of all creatures because he has lost his instincts, technology is the set of tricks used to survive.

Two Greek terms form the word “technology”—*techné*, which means art in the sense of cunning or sleight of hand, and *logos*, which originally meant proportion, the golden rule by which the cosmos was built, and later came to mean the “lifegiving word.” Both refer to the body. *Logos* describes how the body sounds and *techné* how it affects the environment.

Technology, thus defined, takes on the meaning of what others call “culture.” This was the place technology held in history until Western modernity and cosmopolitan civilization emerged. By transforming people from users of tools into masters that are served by tech-

nology, the meaning of technology has changed.

First, the tool was detached from the hand. *Techné* and *mechané* ceased to refer to the wizardry of the artisans’ hands and came to refer, rather, mainly to engines, motors and robots.

Second, tools became a means to “produce” useful things for increas-

Innately neither good nor evil, technology is exactly what the maker makes of it.

ingly useless people.

Third, technology turned into a mechanical womb. Societies have become entombed in the economies their technologies have generated.

The “media” provide a

poignant example of this contemporary ambiguity. Almost by definition, “medium” means that something will be between us when we talk to each other. The multiplication of media means less closeness. And yet, we have chosen to remain free to use technology to enhance our ability to be present to each other.

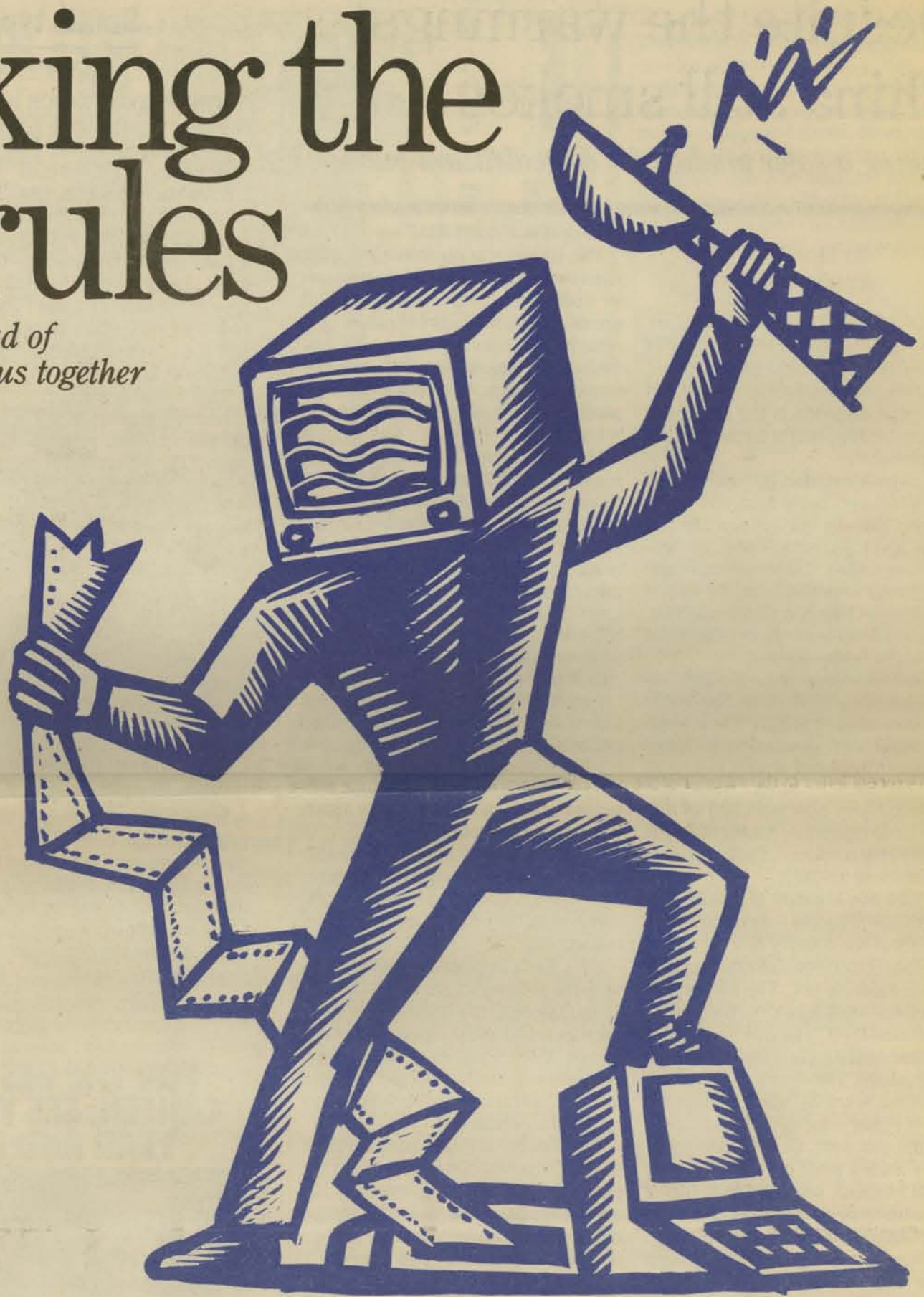


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