

When Technology Buried Science in a Shallow Grave. “The Fourth Industrial Revolution”

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Even young children can sense that we live in an age in which literally none of the information available is reliable or believable. Information on a global scale is subject to Gresham’s Law: low-quality information spreads everywhere and the truth is hoarded by the few.

What went wrong, and why?

In a sense, the original sin was the confusion of science, the philosophical pursuit of the truth by means of confirmation of accuracy through systematic experiments, with technology, the tools, and the systems based on tools, that serve to create an effect, or to complete a task.

Technology is not science. The Internet, and the supercomputers that lurk behind it, are employed by the rich and powerful to create a virtual reality for us with the intention of convincing us that the images and the effects generated by technology have some relationship to the truth, to science. They want to reassure us that everything is fine when it is not.

If we want to find our way out of this nightmare, we must first recognize that technology today has become the complete opposite of science: a distraction, or a weapon employed to render us passive and ignorant.

As Paul Goodman wrote, “Whether or not it draws on new scientific research, technology is a branch of moral philosophy, not of science.” It is the moral aspect of technology that should be foremost in our minds, and not the gaudy special effects that enchant, that pretend to be science.

Before we develop a smartphone, a satellite system or a supercomputer, we must first employ the scientific method to determine what the impact of that technology will be over

the long term on the Earth and on humanity. Such a combination of science and technology literally never happens.

Today, thousands of supercomputers calculate the worth of derivatives as part of a money game for the super-rich, a fixed round of poker. Few super computers are calculating how the use of massive amounts of electricity to power the next generation of AI will impact the climate over the next fifty years, or what the impact of the use of plastics will be on the oceans for that the next century, or what the prospects for the production of food for the 200 years will be in light of the rapid degradation of soil.

Supercomputers are being employed to calculate profit, and not sustainability, and they are so assigned for a political, not a scientific, reason. Technology serves as a sheepskin for the most ruthless forms of economic exploitation. The powerful know that if AI was focused on sustainability over centuries, the answer from its calculations would be that we should stop using AI if we wish to survive.

We confuse science with technology at our peril.

How to dumb down youth

Our youth are told by the corrupt media that they must prepare for a technology-driven future that is inevitable, that is coming in accord with some law of nature. They are exhorted to prepare for a supposed “Fourth Industrial Revolution” that will somehow improve their lives even as their jobs are automated away, even as their minds are destroyed by video games, pornography and online gambling.

When the bankers and CEOs call it the “Fourth Industrial Revolution,” they are not kidding. It is a revolution in which a tiny handful of people seize control of the means of production, and the ideological apparatus, for the entire Earth.

We are bombarded, against our will, with information produced without review by third parties, by corporations. Much of it is spurious and misleading. The content of movies and dramas, of commercials and advertisements, promotes waste and indulgence and glorifies the idle lives of the rich.

We are forced to rely on corporate-controlled sources like Google or the New York Times for information and we are not told that these organizations have a long history of providing false information for profit. The entire media/ education/ advertising complex has been mobilized to promote campaigns to dumb down people and to encourage anti-intellectual sentiments. The drive to force all education to be conducted on-line speeds up this dangerous trend.

How many times have you heard old timers remark that young people are self-centered, superficial and isolated? The assumption underlying this statement is that youth, who are our future, have gone bad because of the poor choices that they have made.

Nothing could be further from the truth. Those youth are identified by corporations as the target for a decadent consumer culture that encourages them to buy and to be distracted by services that they must pay for. They cannot escape from this unrelenting ideology because corporations are free to pump this trash into the lives of youth, from nursery school on. There is no force present to defend our children.

The main purpose of the games, the pornography, the foolish and shallow television programs citizens are subject to, is not sales.

No. Much of this disinformation is offered to us for free because the purpose is to alter our thinking. The funding of the media by advertising from corporations allows them to dictate to journalists the content of their articles, to make journalists present consumption and development in a positive light even as it destroys the environment and alienates our citizens.

The ultimate product is the viewer or reader, not the item presented in the ad. The reader is rendered up to the investment banks and multinational corporations, as a prostrate consumer, not a citizen, a dependent and limited individual with no moral compass to guide him, incapable of distinguishing images from reality. We desperately need to interact with others. We need jobs that let us work together with others to create a better world.

Technology could help, but it does not because it has no relationship to science and it has no moral content any more.

In our daily lives, our interactions with the world are limited to prerecorded messages, automated checkouts, and online classes.

Our culture could be changed if we wanted to change it. The fact that most people cannot read books, or focus for more than 10 minutes on a topic, is a result of habits created by exposure to technology that could be reversed if there were a will.

We could treat serious issues in a serious manner in our society, and we could discuss the history of how we got here, the reality of how our society works, and the wisdom of learning for oneself through art, music, philosophy and literature. We could give more emphasis to the wisdom passed on to us by our parents and grandparents than to the superficial sayings of those made famous by the media.

The murder weapon can be found in the hands of the advertising firms, the puppeteers behind the screen of media. They create a false reality that degrades; they label those who tell the truth false. They make sure that the citizen faces a wasteland on every TV channel, in every newspaper, in every corner of every mall and every office building. Their destruction of intellectual inquiry made possible the rise of clown tyrants and laid the foundations for a media circus dominated by the willful and the indulgent.

We can trace this war on intellectual inquiry back to the efforts of Sigmund Freud's disciple Edward Bernays in the 1950s to develop concrete methods for manipulating the public through powerful images and simplistic slogans. Bernays gave corporations long-term strategies to make use of weaknesses in human psychology so as to turn citizens into consumers who are drawn to conventional interpretations presented by authority figures.

The manipulation of the human mind by the powerful has a long history. Yet the situation would not have become so dire if our seduction by the stunts of computers, by the legerdemain of mechanical reproduction, had not blinded us to the murder of scientific inquiry.

The death of science is an extension of the death of philosophy. Universities are extirpating philosophy departments left and right, supposedly because they no longer can find jobs for

their graduates. The study of philosophy is treated in the media as a quaint field for the impractical. In reality, however, philosophy must be the foundation for all understanding. Without an understanding of the invisible principles according to which the universe, and human institutions, function, our society drifts, our government becomes an unmoored ship, and we slide into treacherous straits.

The death of philosophy means that the visible — the hurricane, the mass shooting, the speech by a politician — is the only thing that registers in our minds. Climate change, cultural decadence and political mannerism, the most serious dangers we face, seem like abstractions that do not even enter our discussions.

Without a philosophical foundation, without a methodology for confirming what is true, science is reduced to visual stimulation and rhetoric.

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The destruction of the intellectual

The obsession with the seen, and the neglect of the invisible and the abstract, is related to the precipitous decline of the intellectual in society.

This process was pushed forward by wealthy ideologues seeking to defend their power such as the Scaife family, the Koch family, and the Coors family. They paid top dollar to create and to circulate narratives in the media that suggested that business administration and marketing were practical and fundamental because they create wealth. They paid newspapers to repeat and repeat that the intellectuals who try to understand the fundamentals of the universe and of society are impractical and elitist.

The exploitation of nature, or of fellow humans, the manipulation of currency and capital by investors, was lauded by the new gurus that these groups funded, and then that argument was fed to us through the commercial media. The criminals who made wealth out of nothing through financial fraud like Elon Musk, Warren Buffett and Bill Gates are presented to us as

icons for genuflection.

Thus, an enormous number of Americans were convinced to pursue careers in business and they dedicated themselves to the proposition that their fellow men should be objects for exploitation, that the principle in all interactions is competition rather than cooperation.

If you do a search for a job, you will find that the only jobs available are in exploitative fields that promote consumption and value growth over values or understanding. Even the careers possible at NGOs with important missions require that one beg ruthless businessmen for funding to keep going.

The decline of the role of the intellectual in a society controlled by corporations did not lead academics to build bridges to working people, or to find solidarity with the impoverished; Quite the opposite. Rather, intellectuals sought refuge in an even more narcissistic and even more elitist institutional culture, one that alienates workers and allowed for the discontent to turn rather to the far right for vision.

The commercialization of the university

The degradation of the intellectual is part and parcel of the commercialization of the university over the last two decades.

Institutions that once promoted intellectual inquiry have devolved into top-heavy academic bureaucracies focused on rewarding deans and provosts with high salaries, and serving the corporate clients that have replaced government as sources of funding. More often than not, the top decision makers are not even academics, but MBAs and accountants who consider research and education a service, the equivalent to supplying broadband to the consumer, and not a moral goal.

The professor has become a day laborer subject to market forces whose value is determined by his or her popularity with his students, the funds he or she raises from corporations and his or her ability to publish in specialized journals that have a low tolerance for originality.

The administrators, responding to “market forces” compel professors to write in obscure language inaccessible to anyone who has not attended graduate school so that they can publish in journals that few will ever read. Professors who do not write for those academic journals cannot keep their jobs.

To top it off, those journals are inaccessible to the citizen, and will never show up in a Google search. Paywall services like JSTOR (a cover for Elsevier and other parasite corporations that make money off of the intellectual labor of others) charge enormous fees for access to research that was funded with tax dollars.

When the American programmer Aaron Swartz, founder of Creative Commons, released to the public JSTOR articles based on research funded by the public, he paid for that act with his life.

Courses offerings at the university have been cut back because, supposedly, students are no longer interested in the humanities or the arts. The fact that the decision of corporations not to hire those with a background in the humanities is not an economic reality, but an explicit political act, is never mentioned.

The promotion by corporations of a shallow materialistic culture in the media that discourages interest in literature and art is considered to be a fact of life, not a criminal conspiracy to dumb down citizens.

The media tells us constantly that democracy is critical, but a society without ethically committed intellectuals, without institutions that can support those intellectuals, is like a body with no bones. No degree of elections, or of heated media debates, can save such a doomed society.

The ideological commitment to public service, and to self-sacrifice, on the part of intellectuals has vanished. Corporations and banks have pressured institutions such as universities and research institutes, museums and libraries, orchestras and theatres, as well as government and corporate institutions, to glorify overpaid executives and to marginalize and demean the intellectuals, artists and writers that those institutions were meant to support.

When Drew Faust retired as president of Harvard in 2018, she immediately joined the board of Goldman Sachs — such a blatant conflict of interest would have been unthinkable twenty years ago.

Harvard, once famous for its research and teaching, is now prized primarily by investment banks for its \$50 billion endowment. The brand value of “Harvard” has value for corporations who find “strategic alliances” with select professors helpful for pushing their agendas on the American people.

The corporate takeover of academics was fatal for science. As Marc Edwards and Siddhartha Roy detail in their article “Academic Research in the 21st Century: Maintaining Scientific Integrity in a Climate of Perverse Incentives and Hypercompetition” (Environmental Engineering Science, Jan, 2017), truth does not hold a candle to profit maximization.

Professors are hired and fired on the basis of quantitative performance metrics: “publication count, citations, combined citation-publication counts (e.g., h-index), journal impact factors (JIF), total research dollars, and total patents.”

Seemingly scientific, this dark alchemy has little, or nothing, to do with the search for the truth.

The increase in direct, or indirect, corporate funding has increased the number of taboo topics for research (the privatization and militarization of space and the Arctic, the takeover of government functions by multinational banks, or the corruption of academics). Intellectuals cannot discuss these topics unless they are ready to be exiled to the margins, to have their writings labeled as “alternative” or “conspiracy theories.”

How technology shut down the American mind

It has become a commonplace comment that the entire world seems to have gone crazy. This compelling impression usually does not develop far beyond that primitive formulation.

Yes, the United States is governed by the insane; Yes, it has become a literal psychopathocracy.

The question is whether we are observing a periodic decadence, akin to the collapse of the

Roman empire, or a different phenomenon?

We witness all around us extremes of cognitive dissonance that allow highly educated people to blithely ignore catastrophic climate change, the preparations for world war, and the radical privatization of the entire economy.

Could there be something beyond simple denial and self-centeredness at play here?

When we spend our days staring at smartphones, stay up late playing games, watching pornography, or chatting with friends about popular music or trends in fashion and food, is that smartphone serving as a portal that allows us access to information that we need?

Or could it be that the smartphone is modifying how we think and behave, setting our priorities for us and suggesting to us what values to uphold, how to act?

Are, perhaps, those smartphones that expose us to video games glorifying military combat, to Youtube broadcasts promoting stupid cat tricks, weapons created and distributed to undermine the capacity of the citizen to think deeply, to distract us so we cannot comprehend the radical transformation of our world into a techno-tyranny?

Are those smartphones intended to create addictions and obsessions in us that inhibit organized action to create our own systems of governance?

Advances in technology not only transform the landscape of human society, they also undermine our capacity to comprehend the shifts taking place. Our brains are being reprogrammed by the smartphones that we assume help us to communicate.

Technologically-induced passivity that destroys human society is as devastating as it is invisible, it is a cultural holocaust that first kills the concept of the citizen and of the family member by using seemingly innocuous, even helpful, technology to enter the private lives of the individual.

Nicholas Carr's book, "What the Internet is Doing to Our Brains: The Shallows," provides extensive scientific evidence of how the Internet remaps our brains to be inclined to respond to instantaneous stimulation and disinclined from complex, long-term, thinking.

Over time, such stimulation renders complex, three-dimensional contemplation of contemporary affairs virtually impossible.

In the case of youth encouraged by corporations to depend on such external devices from infancy, the impact is crippling. It is a form of fascism by subterfuge, or as Sheldon Wolin explains in his book "Democracy Incorporated" such technology creates an "inverted totalitarianism" in which we are controlled by corporations in our daily lives but continue to imagine there exists some form of "democratic process" because of what we see on television.

We are forced to use social media like Facebook or Twitter, but we cannot vote, or even offer our opinions, as to how that social media (technology) is developed, or what the rules for these social media platforms are. We are told that we have a choice of social media, but no one can set up a social media platform of critical scale without enormous amounts of capital. Not a single communally-administered social media platform of scale has been permitted to develop. That means that global investment banks determine that manner in

which we interact with others.

Carr explains that the brain's neuroplasticity allows it to evolve, often in a negative sense, in response to stimulation from the internet. Our neurons want us to keep exercising the circuits we formed through our internet surfing because they offer a seductive stimulation. Quick responses from a Google search, or from a Facebook posting, stimulate neurons and release pleasing stimulants.

The unused neural circuits that were once employed in complex three-dimensional consideration of long-term personal experiences and of shifts in culture and society are ruthlessly pruned away in an invisible neural Darwinism in that process. The result is not technological flexibility and liberation, but rather rigid thinking and behavior.

The neurologist Norman Doidge writes: "If we stop exercising our mental skills, we do not just forget them: the brain map space for those skills is turned over to the skills we practice instead." That is to say, that it becomes impossible for the brain to return to its original capacity for deep thinking after being subject to this diet of intellectual junk food.

Hours on smartphones, exploring social media and chatting with friends, has rendered us incapable of comprehending risk involved in climate change, or in the arms race, or in the promotion of a bogus COVID19 virus to justify totalitarian corporate control.

The psychopath behind the psychopath

There is one more piece to this puzzle.

Is it simply the case that greedy billionaires use technology as a means to reduce us to slavery as they seek to further increase their wealth, or are they also being drawn into the trans-human realm and losing their bearings in the process?

If we peer behind the curtains, will we discover that technology has taken over the entire system of things?

Could it be that there is an ultimate psychopath behind psychopaths like Bill Gates and Elon Musk

The psychopath playing the flute for the billionaires as they lead us to our collective doom, is not a specific monster, but the network connecting together tens of thousands of supercomputers around the world. Those supercomputers are the real power that stand beyond the reach of the constitutions of any of the pathetic little nation states, or of any misshapen global institutions like the United Nations.

Those supercomputers purr softly as they calculate to the tenth decimal point how to maximize profit every day, every minute and every second. They make the ultimate decisions for international banks and corporations, and not only because they are fast and perfectly integrated. They are capable of something that no human can do: they can assess the monetary value of the entire Earth and can extract profit from every aspect of human society in perfect accord with the algorithms they were assigned, and do so without any hesitation, without the slightest ethical qualm. They were not programmed to calculate the sustainability of the Earth.

We do not have to wait for supercomputers to achieve consciousness in order to lose control

of our civilization. All we need is for computers to set the priorities for our society on the basis of profit without any consideration for our long-term needs. If social media, videos and games, remap the neural networks of our brains, the computers will take over by default long before they have consciousness. We have delegated the administration of our economy to supercomputers without even noticing it.

Do those supercomputers act on the basis of what we ask of them? Perhaps, or perhaps not.

There is one critical imperative for the network of supercomputers consuming electricity on a huge scale. That imperative has nothing to do with the id or the ego. These networks are compelled by the second law of thermodynamics to create greater entropy, to consume more energy. It is this drive, rather than any fuzzy consciousness more appropriate for science fiction novels, that powers their decisions as a system.

The result?

The one-eyed humans whose reasoning and perceptions have been degraded by the stimulation of technology, who have been deprived of science and metaphysics, are being led to the precipice by a massively-parallel blind man.

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