

Digital Reality

After millions of years of genetic and cultural evolution in analog mode, the human species has found digital, and it's a Pandora's Box. As we rush headlong into the digital age, we seem to be blissfully unaware of its limitations, side effects, and consequences.

In the initial development of human speech, communication was about tangible immediate reality and not much else. As civilization became increasingly complex, there was more time for creative and contemplative thought and the development of complex culture, and along with it the development of fiction. With the invention of the printing press, the accumulation and dissemination of cultural hindsight increased, enabling more complex personal and cultural foresight and also more complex fiction. Digital technology has enabled an exponential increase in the quantity and complexity of fiction. An increasing percentage of the human population are spending an increasing percentage of their lives in fictitious realities. For a substantial percentage of children, most of their life's experiences are abstract mental constructs and fiction. Most of their reality has become fictitious.

The effects of virtual entertainment on young children are just beginning to be explored. A child is conceived with a fresh brain into which life's experiences build a person. Each day's experiences add an ever smaller percentage to a person's personality. The first portion of the brain is filled with input and output to the autonomic systems of the body. Next come input from the interior and exterior senses and output to the muscles. At birth, sensory input gains its initial perspective of the universe at large and the range of body movement is fully extended. For the next year or so, the expansion of personality is largely preoccupied with exploration and control of the body. Gradually, normal development turns to exploration, interpretation, and manipulation of the immediate environment. If, at this point, their environment is limited to or predominated by non-interactive visual and auditory input, an imbalance in the evolution of personality develops between observation and manipulation. The more extreme the imbalance, the less capable a person becomes at coordinating observation and interpretation with manipulation of their environment. When this condition is augmented by the introduction of video games, personality becomes conditioned to very simple manipulation in response to immediate stimulus without complex interpretation [if you take the time to think even one tiny analytical thought, you lose]. As video games become more interactive, players are increasingly immersed in fictitious reality. Subsequent immersion in the real world of complex situations without continuous immediate stimuli, requiring complex manipulation of language, tools, and materials, with very real consequences, leads to passive-reactive people with very high levels of incompetence and frustration. Virtual entertainment is rapidly becoming an extremely dangerous dissipation of human consciousness. It conditions the type of passive reactive personality that is unaccustomed to independent creative thought and is easily manipulated by

emotional stimuli. Video games are an excellent tool for teaching hand to hand combat, but soldiers are for war and war is about destroying and killing. Playstation is actively training warriors in large quantities when what we need are creative, productive workers and educated, responsible citizens to produce the wealth and wisdom that create peace.

With the advent of the cell phone, a generation of virtual orphans are spending a rapidly increasing percentage of their lives engaged in idle conversation and a rapidly decreasing percentage of their lives learning anything about anything. In the absence of parents, living in comfort, a generation of children are evolving a culture without cultural inheritance. Some of the many things that they didn't inherit are the senses of responsibility and respect, the understanding of work, the ability to do physical work as their bodies become inexperienced and weak from lack of use, and a general lack of the hindsight that enables foresight. A large percentage of our children are rapidly becoming a strange new kind of feral.

Throughout most of human history children have been raised by their grandparents. The reason for this has been that people of childbearing age were needed for the physical work necessary for survival, but the result has been that children were raised by older, wiser adults. This conjunction of the energy and intelligence of youth and the wisdom of old age multiplies the rate of transfer of fundamental cultural knowledge. The less time a child spends interacting with and observing adults, the less cultural inheritance the child learns. In the midst of the current feeding frenzy, large percentages of children are increasingly apart from their parents and grandparents and have very little access to cultural wisdom. Without knowledge from the past, they lack the hindsight upon which to build foresight.

There's no going back. Despite its many dangerous side effects, the communication revolution is here to stay and has the potential to exponentially increase our awareness of the human condition and the universe around us.

Digital communication is one of the most dangerous Pandora's Boxes the human species has ever opened, but it also holds the promise of an immense increase in the overall wisdom of the human community.