

The Hunchback of Notre Dame - Victor Hugo (1831)

<https://dailylit.com/read/161-the-hunchback-of-notre-dame?page=66>

The human race has, in short, had no important thought which it has not written in stone. And why? Because every thought, either philosophical or religious, is interested in perpetuating itself; because the idea which has moved one generation wishes to move others also, and leave a trace. Now, what a precarious immortality is that of the manuscript! How much more solid, durable, unyielding, is a book of stone! In order to destroy the written word, a torch and a Turk are sufficient. To demolish the constructed word, a social revolution, a terrestrial revolution are required.

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In the fifteenth century everything changes.

Human thought discovers a mode of perpetuating itself, not only more durable and more resisting than architecture, but still more simple and easy. Architecture is dethroned.

Gutenberg's letters of lead are about to supersede Orpheus's letters of stone.

The invention of printing is the greatest event in history. It is the mother of revolution. It is the mode of expression of humanity which is totally renewed; it is human thought stripping off one form and donning another; it is the complete and definitive change of skin of that symbolical serpent which since the days of Adam has represented intelligence.

"To think that realistic fiction is by definition superior to imaginative fiction is to think imitation is superior to invention." (Ursula K Le Guin)

Ursula K Le Guin's speech at National Book Awards (2014)

<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2014/nov/20/ursula-k-le-guin-national-book-awards-speech>

Hard times are coming, when we'll be wanting the voices of writers who can see alternatives to how we live now, can see through our fear-stricken society and its obsessive technologies to other ways of being, and even imagine real grounds for hope. We'll need writers who can remember freedom – poets, visionaries – realists of a larger reality.

Right now, we need writers who know the difference between production of a market commodity and the practice of an art. Developing written material to suit sales strategies in order to maximise corporate profit and advertising revenue is not the same thing as responsible book publishing or authorship.

Isaac Asimov - from Runaround (1942)

from "Handbook of Robotics, 56th Edition, 2058 A.D.":

"Three Laws of Robotics":

1. A robot may not injure a human being or, through inaction, allow a human being to come to harm.
2. A robot must obey the orders given it by human beings except where such orders would conflict with the First Law.
3. A robot must protect its own existence as long as such protection does not conflict with the First or Second Laws.

Isaac Asimov - from Foundation and Earth (1986)

"Zeroth Law":

0. A robot may not harm humanity, or, by inaction, allow humanity to come to harm.

...

Trevize frowned. "How do you decide what is injurious, or not injurious, to humanity as a whole?"

"Precisely, sir," said Daneel. "In theory, the Zeroth Law was the answer to our problems. In practice, we could never decide. A human being is a concrete object. Injury to a person can be estimated and judged. Humanity is an abstraction."

Cybernetics is the science of control and communication in the animal and the machine.
(Norbert Wiener)

Cybernetics is a transdisciplinary approach for exploring regulatory systems (such as mechanical, physical, biological, cognitive, and social systems) their structures, constraints, and possibilities. Cybernetics is applicable when a system being analyzed is involved in a closed signaling loop; that is, where action by the system generates some change in its environment and that change is reflected in that system in some manner (feedback) that triggers a system change.[[wikipedia](#)]

Norbert Wiener

Cybernetics: Or Control and Communication in the Animal and the Machine (1948)

https://archive.org/stream/NorbertWienerHumanUseOfHumanBeings/NorbertWienerHuman_use_of_human_beings_djvu.txt

The world of the future will be an even more demanding struggle against the limitations of our intelligence, not a comfortable hammock in which we can lie down to be waited upon by our robot slaves.

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Let us remember that the automatic machine is the precise economic equivalent of slave labor. Any labor which competes with slave labor must accept the economic consequences of slave labor.

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Information is information, not matter or energy.

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At every stage of technique since Daedalus or Hero of Alexandria, the ability of the artificer to produce a working simulacrum of a living organism has always intrigued people.

Donna Haraway, from: Cyborg Manifesto (1984/1991)

<https://people.emich.edu/acoykenda/cyborg1.htm>

The cyborg is a creature in a post-gender world; it has no truck with bisexuality, pre-oedipal symbiosis, unalienated labour, or other seductions to organic wholeness through a final appropriation of all the powers of the parts into a higher unity. In a sense, the cyborg has no origin story in the Western sense -- a "final" irony since the cyborg is also the awful apocalyptic telos (ultimate object) of the "West's" escalating dominations of abstract individuation, an ultimate self untied at last from all dependency, a man in space.

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The cyborg does not dream of community on the model of the organic family, this time without the oedipal project. The cyborg would not recognize the Garden of Eden; it is not made of mud and cannot dream of returning to dust.

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Nothing really convincingly settles the separation of human and animal. And many people no longer feel the need for such a separation; indeed, many branches of feminist culture affirm the pleasure of connection of human and other living creatures. Movements for animal rights are not irrational denials of human uniqueness; they are a clear-sighted recognition of connection across the discredited breach of nature and culture. Biology and evolutionary theory over the last two centuries have simultaneously produced modern organisms as objects of knowledge and reduced the line between humans and animals to a faint trace re-etched in ideological struggle or professional disputes between life and social science.

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Pre-cybernetic machines could be haunted; there was always the spectre of the ghost in the machine. This dualism structured the dialogue between materialism and idealism that was settled by a dialectical progeny, called spirit or history, according to taste. But basically machines were not self-moving, self-designing, autonomous. They could not achieve man's dream, only mock it. They were not man, an author to himself, but only a caricature of that masculinist reproductive dream. To think they were otherwise was paranoid. Now we are not so sure. Late twentieth-century machines have made thoroughly ambiguous the difference between natural and artificial, mind and body, self-developing and externally designed, and many other distinctions that used to apply to organisms and machines. Our machines are disturbingly lively, and we ourselves frighteningly inert.

Technological determination is only one ideological space opened up by the reconceptions of machine and organism as coded texts through which we engage in the play of writing and reading the world.

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Cyborg politics is the struggle for language and the struggle against perfect communication, against the one code that translates all meaning perfectly, the central dogma of

phallocentrism. That is why cyborg politics insist on noise and advocate pollution, rejoicing in the illegitimate fusions of animal and machine. These are the couplings which make Man and Woman so problematic, subverting the structure of desire, the force imagined to generate language and gender, and so subverting the structure and modes of reproduction of "Western" identity, of nature and culture, of mirror and eye, slave and master, body and mind.

Alan Kirby - The Death of Postmodernism And Beyond (2006) later Digimodernism

https://philosophynow.org/issues/58/The_Death_of_Postmodernism_And_Beyond

Just look out into the cultural market-place: buy novels published in the last five years, watch a twenty-first century film, listen to the latest music – above all just sit and watch television for a week – and you will hardly catch a glimpse of postmodernism. Similarly, one can go to literary conferences (as I did in July) and sit through a dozen papers which make no mention of Theory, of Derrida, Foucault, Baudrillard.

...

I believe there is more to this shift than a simple change in cultural fashion. The terms by which authority, knowledge, selfhood, reality and time are conceived have been altered, suddenly and forever...

Postmodernism, like modernism and romanticism before it, fetishised [ie placed supreme importance on] the author, even when the author chose to indict or pretended to abolish him or herself. But the culture we have now fetishises the recipient of the text to the degree that they become a partial or whole author of it.

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The pseudo-modern cultural phenomenon *par excellence* is the internet. Its central act is that of the individual clicking on his/her mouse to move through pages in a way which cannot be duplicated, inventing a pathway through cultural products which has never existed before and never will again. This is a far more intense engagement with the cultural process than anything literature can offer, and gives the undeniable sense (or illusion) of the individual controlling, managing, running, making up his/her involvement with the cultural product. Internet pages are not 'authored' in the sense that anyone knows who wrote them, or cares. The majority either require the individual to make them work, like Streetmap or Route Planner, or permit him/her to add to them, like Wikipedia, or through feedback on, for instance, media websites. In all cases, it is intrinsic to the internet that *you can easily make up pages yourself* (eg blogs).

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If the internet and its use define and dominate pseudo-modernism, the new era has also seen the revamping of older forms along its lines. Cinema in the pseudo-modern age looks more and more like a computer game.

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It is important here to see that whereas the form may change (Big Brother may wither on the vine), the terms by which individuals relate to their television screen and consequently what broadcasters show have incontrovertibly changed. The purely 'spectacular' function of television, as with all the arts, has become a marginal one: what is central now is the busy, active, forging work of the individual who would once have been called its recipient. In all of

this, the 'viewer' feels powerful and is indeed necessary; the 'author' as traditionally understood is either relegated to the status of the one who sets the parameters within which others operate, or becomes simply irrelevant, unknown, sidelined; and the 'text' is characterised both by its hyper-ephemerality and by its instability.

Wikipedia:Neutral point of view

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Neutral_point_of_view

NPOV is a fundamental principle of Wikipedia and of other Wikimedia projects. It is also one of Wikipedia's three core content policies; the other two are "Verifiability" and "No original research". These policies jointly determine the type and quality of material that is acceptable in Wikipedia articles, and, because they work in harmony, they should not be interpreted in isolation from one another. Editors are strongly encouraged to familiarize themselves with all three.

This policy is non-negotiable, and the principles upon which it is based cannot be superseded by other policies or guidelines, nor by editor consensus.

Evgeny Morozov

Is Smart Making Us Dumb?

<https://www.wsj.com/articles/SB10001424127887324503204578318462215991802>

With "smart" technology in the ascendant, it will be hard to resist the allure of a frictionless, problem-free future. When Eric Schmidt, Google's executive chairman, says that "people will spend less time trying to get technology to work... because it will just be seamless," he is not wrong: This is the future we're headed toward. But not all of us will want to go there.

A more humane smart-design paradigm would happily acknowledge that the task of technology is not to liberate us from problem-solving. Rather, we need to enroll smart technology in helping us with problem-solving. What we want is not a life where friction and frustrations have been carefully designed out, but a life where we can overcome the frictions and frustrations that stand in our way.

Truly smart technologies will remind us that we are not mere automatons who assist big data in asking and answering questions. Unless designers of smart technologies take stock of the complexity and richness of the lived human experience—with its gaps, challenges and conflicts—their inventions will be destined for the SmartBin of history.

For future reference check

From CBS' Big Bang Theory

Sheldon: At best I have 60 years left. 60 only gets me to here. I need to get here.

Leonard: What's there?

Sheldon: The earliest estimate of the Singularity, when man will be able to transfer his consciousness into machines and achieve immortality.

Leonard: So, you're upset about missing out on becoming some sort of freakish, self-aware robot.

Sheldon: By this much!

Leonard: Tough break. You want eggs?

Sheldon: You don't get it, Leonard. I'm going to miss so much: the Unified Field Theory, Cold Fusion, the dogopus.

Leonard: What's a dogopus?

Sheldon: A hybrid dog and octopus — man's best underwater friend.

Leonard: Is somebody working on that?

Sheldon: I was going to. I planned on giving it to myself for my 300th birthday.