

The Evolutionary Importance of Technology

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These extremely exotic fields, solid-state physics, nanotechnology, gene transplant and all this stuff; they feel individually that complete breakthrough in their own field lies just 18 months, two years, three years in the future. They can see their technological and research dreams converging, but this enormous wavefront of knowledge that has risen up out of the context of human civilization doesn't communicate along the front of the wave. None of these people in any of these fields have a very clear grip on what's going on in the labs down the hall or two floors up, in different departments. What's happening is that the human database has taken on a kind of self-organizing quality. It's no longer entirely being coordinated by political decision makers or corporate decision makers. It's just simply taken on a life of its own.

I've long thought that one way of thinking about what's going on on this planet is that information is bootstrapping itself to higher and higher levels of self-reflection and self-coordination using whatever means are necessary. When geology was all there was, that was the medium. When biology was all there was, that was the medium. When chipped flint and ceramic was all there was, that was the medium, and now the electronic information transfer technology is so all-pervasive that it's as though information has come into its own. It is now very restless in its relationship with biology as it explores the new world of silicon into which it seeks to transform itself. Technology has become prosthesis for the human species. It's our machines and our technologies that are now the major evolutionary forces acting upon us. It's not our political systems, it's these extra-sexual children, these mind children that we have assembled out of the imagination. I find it very promising and very challenging and very interesting. I think that somehow the way back to the archaic, to the world of ecological balance and low technology and retraction of toxic infrastructure and all of that good stuff doesn't lie in some kind of Luddite know-nothingism or some kind of fascist program of limiting population and this sort of thing — although I favor limiting population, I just can't figure out a way to do it that leaves human freedom intact — instead it has to be a forward escape, a

forward escape through technology, but technology that serves an agenda of archaic revivalism.

Between the spread of information transfer technology, the internet and its promise of virtual reality soon to come, and biotechnology, which is literally taking apart the constituents of the living world and using them to produce all the drugs, all the foods, all the vitamins, all the nutritional supplements and then many other solid-state materials, between those two factors; and then nanotechnology, the technology of producing tiny machines made of diamond by the trillions designed to do everything that nature does, so that cities can be grown like forests, and China can be fed out of matter compilers and there is a complete break with the agricultural cycle so that the earth need no longer sustain the human population, and so then the human population, by breaking its reliance on the agricultural cycle, gains some political breathing room; all of this is coming very, very fast and is largely unanticipated by the political, managerial types. What it means to me personally, in terms of my own ideas about the future, is that I can now see without too much sweat from here to the eschaton in ten easy steps. It's perfectly clear that if novelty is intensifying and locally concentrating then where it's probably headed is into cyberspace or some kind of virtual space, so that long before 2012 the various ontologies of world religions will be peddled as theme parks in virtual space. You'll be hard pressed to know whether you're in heaven or simply in Heaven Land, which is a preview of heaven attainable by paying a \$50 entrance fee at the turnstile. This is going to make it very difficult for all my predictions to be put in context, because they will be both true and untrue. Everything will come true in cyberspace; that's the whole idea.

What cyberspace is, on one level, is simply the human imagination vivified, hardwired. What we're doing furiously, as fast as we can, is exteriorizing the human nervous system into a global organism of some sort, which has a weird kind of Husserlian intersubjectivity about it. It is neither subjective nor objective: we are subjective nodes embedded in this domain of technologically-created intersubjectivity between other human beings and machines. What's happening is that a lot of people are being left behind or without even realizing it are just opting out and saying, "I can't handle it. It's too much to think about, I think I'll see what's on daytime TV," or, "I'll buy a newspaper and walk in the park," to attempt to maintain the illusion that things are as they are. Things aren't as they are. Things have already become as they will be. The future is no longer ahead of us: we're there. The only question is, where do you position yourself now in this multidimensional matrix? You can deny it, which is to become a conservative or, even more reactive to it, you can become a reprobate, or you can move toward the front of knowledge, position yourself close to these unfolding and empowering technologies.

As all notions of commodity and scarcity begin to break down, it seems to me that the sanest place to try to occupy in this whole situation is that of artist-producer, and that it's very, very important to not consume this stuff. The world is being divided into artists and marks, into people who are somehow initiated into a higher-level maturity of what the society is about and how it works —

it's a kind of street-smarts — and then the poor souls who just take it all for granted and actually are concerned about those families of Flight 800. People so harebrained as to buy horseshit like that are going to have a hard time as the crap game of the future unfolds to its full fury; so I think it's very important for people to define themselves as artists and learn tools and understand just how the game is being played in this informational jungle that is being erected, because you will either have a plan or you will become part of somebody else's plan, and there are a million plans out there waiting to ensnare the clueless.

So, more than ever, it becomes necessary for us to have some kind of anchor to a real modality. It's too predictable for me to try to draw out the suspense; as far as I can tell the only place where we can touch the earth in this evolving situation is through our bodies, into feeling, by any means necessary, and that would certainly include psychedelics. There are two very interesting books that I've read in the past year: one is Morris Berman's *Coming to Our Senses*, and the other is David Abram's book *The Spell of the Sensuous*. Both of these books are about feelings, essentially. Whitehead, who I take as my mentor, created a mathematically formal metaphysic in which the primary datum of experience is feelings — that's a direct quote from Whitehead. The only thing you can trust at this point is the felt presence of immediate experience, otherwise known as “feelings,” and mathematics; and mathematics is something that most of you have been denied, in order to keep you as marks, so all you have are feelings. So it's very important to empower this dimension which Husserl or Merleau-Ponty or somebody called “the felt presence of immediate experience.” Everything proceeds from that. Even thought is subsequent to feeling, and still more removed is any hypothesis of reality and any theory of morality and any theory of action and so forth and so on.

Psychedelics have traditionally, I now think, played the role of deculturating people. I think the anthropologists got it slightly wrong: when you're taken out into the bushes and given some drug by the fellow members of your tribe, this is not that you are being made a full member of the society, it's that you *were* a full member of the society and now what you're being shown is what's under the board, the tricks of the trade. You're being turned into, not a full member of the society, but what my brother has called an extra-environmental. You're coming from outside. This is a kind of maturity that many people never attain. It never enters their mind that such a state even exists: a state not of alienation, exactly, but of ironical, sophisticated insight into the mechanisms of one's own culture and the cultural games that are being played. This rap would have been applicable at any time that it made sense, certainly any time in the 20th century, but with the rise of these technologies and the acceleration of all this novelty it becomes more and more important to anchor it in this archaic value pattern, accessible through psychedelics.

I don't say this with a sense of urgency; I think it's happening, I don't think there's a problem. The people who are running the internet at the developmental and cutting-edge level are very psychedelic; the connections are not lost. Whether it's consciously or unconsciously apprehended, somehow it can be sensed. The whole countercultural thrust since the '60s has been coherently one

thing. It's about boundary dissolution and connectivity and strange pictures in your head. The psychedelic experience has gone from being a clandestine experience of an individual to becoming the general model for the organization of global society, whether anybody realizes it or not. This idea of all information in circulation, of a never-sleeping global mind; in a sense what's happening is that the unconscious mind is a luxury the human species cannot afford at this point in our dilemma, and so the unconscious mind is simply rising into consciousness by being hardwired into this global infrastructure.