

The Ghost in the Net
By Sam Vaknin, Ph.D.

The Ghost in the Net
by: **Sam Vaknin, Ph.D.**

However far modern science and technology have fallen short of their inherent possibilities, they have taught mankind at least one lesson: Nothing is impossible.

Today, the degradation of the inner life is symbolized by the fact that the only place sacred from interruption is the private toilet.

By his very success in inventing laboursaving devices, modern man has manufactured an abyss of boredom that only the privileged classes in earlier civilizations have ever fathomed.

For most Americans, progress means accepting what is new because it is new, and discarding what is old because it is old.

I would die happy if I knew that on my tombstone could be written these words, "This man was an absolute fool. None of the disastrous things that he reluctantly predicted ever came to pass!"

Lewis Mumford (1895-1990)

Dear Sam,

We begin our series on great personalities of the 20th century with Lewis Mumford. Of course, this is only an excuse to develop our own ideas. Those who are interested in the ideas of "our" characters can go to the nearest bookstore and read directly from the fountain. Anyway, for the sake of those who are not acquainted with Mumford, I will draw a brief biography.

Lewis Mumford was born in 1895 (the same year X-rays were discovered by Roentgen and the Dreyfus affair was another significant "success"). Mumford started his career in the US Patent Office (overseeing "cement and concrete"), which gave him a first person insight into technological innovation processes. Later he made contact with his late master Patrick Geddes (and other great thinkers like Victor Branford). These encounters converted him into a generalist. His writing career extended over six decades in which he made significant contributions to the literature of history, philosophy, art, and architectural criticism. Perhaps best known for his work on urban planning and the study of technology, Mumford was co-founder of the Regional Planning Association of

America and, for 32 years, wrote the "Sky Line" column on architecture for the New Yorker. He served on the faculties of several institutions, including Stanford university, the University of Pennsylvania, and MIT, and was appointed to the New York City Board of Higher Education. He received many awards, as the National Medal for Literature and The National Medal for the Arts.

His first literary work was "The Story of Utopias", which advanced one of the major themes of his life: the utopian (technological) literature and its impact on human development. After some other minor works (which included a beautiful book on Herman Melville, 1929), he published his first great opus, "Technics and Civilization (1934)", one of the first historical works on technology. It was even incorporated in the curricula of technological institutes, like Cal tech, the first technological university to have a historical course. This book was, though with some doubts, technologically oriented. After the war, his point of view, regarding this as well as other matters, changed somewhat. In 1938 he presented "The Culture of Cities", the first work pertaining to the other leitmotif of his life: urbanism and architecture. In the forties and fifties, Mumford produced several works on the "human condition", sanity, city development and arts. In 1961 appeared another major work of his, "The city in History", a complete survey of the city and its cycles.

In the "decisive years", during the sixties, Mumford wrote, in our humble opinion, his major work: "The Myth of the Machine". It was partly based on the ideas of Oswald Spengler as refined by Alfred Toynbee, and, distilling nearly sixty years of investigation, Lewis Mumford brings to a head his radical revisions of the stale popular conceptions of human and technological progress. "The Myth" is a fully developed historical explanation of the irrationalities that have undermined the highest achievements of modern technology - speed, mass production, automation, instant communication, and remote control. These have inevitably brought about pollution, waste, ecological disruption and human extermination. And he makes a comparison - part historical and part artistic - between the state machine of the Pyramid Age and the global cybernetic techno-machine of our "strange days" (the Pentagon of Power).

As the generalist work of Mumford covers practically all fields of knowledge, I propose to you to focus our dialogue on the problem of technology and life (with some linkage to his other major field: urbanism). Indeed, this is a hot topic nowadays (the "mad cow disease" issue).

Highlights of this theme are: Mumford discussion of cybernetics and the "automation of automation" (Wiener) Mumford's polemics with McLuhan and the audio-visual tribe - a humbug, in LM words And especially, his proposal to change the actual mega-technology into the life plenitude of organic polytechnology - anticipating the ecological views of today.

As you are interested in technological media (i.e. your essay on the Internet), here is a first strike courtesy Mr. Mumford:

".... It is to replace human autonomy in every form by an up-to-date electronic model of the megamachine. The mass media, he demonstrates, are 'put out before they are thought out'. In fact, 'their being put out tends to cancel the possibility of their being

thought out at all". Precisely. Here McLuhan gives the whole show away. Because every technical apparatus is an extension of man's bodily organs, including his brain, this peripheral structure, by McLuhan's analysis, must, by its very mass and ubiquity, replace all autonomous needs or desires: since now for us 'technology is a part our bodies', no detachment or divorce is possible. 'Once we have surrendered our senses and nervous systems to the private manipulations of those who would try to benefit from taking a lease on our eyes and ears and nerves, we don't really have any rights (read autonomy) left' ".

"This latter point might well be taken as a warning to disengage ourselves, as soon as possible, from the power system so menacingly described: for McLuhan it leads, rather, to a demand for unconditional surrender. 'Under electric technology', he observes, 'the entire business of man becomes learning and knowing'. Apart from the fact that this is a pathetically academic picture of the potentialities of man, the kind of learning and knowing that McLuhan becomes enraptured over is precisely that which can be programmed on a computer: 'We are now in position...', he observes, 'to transfer the entire show to the memory of a computer'. No better formula could be found for arresting and ultimately suppressing human development..."

Well, this is my opening movement, Your turn, Mr. Vaknin.

Dear RCM,

Good to renew our dialogues. I will get straight to the point, or, rather, to the points. I intend to deal with each and every one of them extensively - but, as is our habit, I am just mapping the territory.

1. Is it meaningful to discuss technology separate from life, as opposed to life, or compared to life? Is it not the inevitable product of life, a determinant of life and part of its definition? Francis Bacon and, centuries later, the visionary Ernst Kapp, thought of technology as a means to conquer and master nature - an expression of the classic dichotomy between observer and observed. But there could be other ways of looking at it (consider, for instance, the seminal work of Friedrich Dessauer). Kapp was the first to talk of technology as "organ projection" (preceding McLuhan by more than a century). Freud wrote in "Civilization and its Discontents": "Man has, as it were, become a kind of prosthetic god. When he puts on all his auxiliary organs he is truly magnificent; but those organs have not grown on to him and they still give him much trouble at times."
2. On the whole, has technology contributed to human development or arrested it?
3. Even if we accept that technology is alien to life, a foreign implant and a potential menace - what frame of reference can accommodate the new convergence between life and technology (mainly medical technology and biotechnology)? What are cyborgs - life or technology? What about clones? Artificial implants? Life sustaining devices (like heart-kidney machines)? Future implants of chips in human brains? Designer babies, tailored to specifications by genetic engineering? What about ARTIFICIAL intelligence?
4. Is technology IN-human or A-human? In other words, are the main, immutable and dominant attributes of technology alien to humans, to the human spirit, or to the human

brain? Is this possible at all? Is such non-human technology likely to be developed by artificial intelligence machines in the future? Finally, is this kind of technology automatically ANTI-human as well? Mumford's classification of all technologies to polytechnic (human-friendly) and monotechnic (human averse) springs to mind.

5. Is the impact technology has on the INDIVIDUAL necessarily identical or even comparable to the impact it has on human collectives and societies? Think Internet - the answer in this case is clearly NEGATIVE.

6. Is it possible to define what is technology at all?

If we adopt Monsma's definition of technology (1986) as "the systematic treatment of an art" - is art to be treated as a variant of technology? Robert Merton's definition is a non-definition because it is so broad it encompasses all teleological human actions: "any complex of standardized means for attaining a predetermined result". Jacques Ellul resorted to tautology: "the totality of methods

rationally arrived at and having absolute efficiency in every field of human activity" (1964). H.D. Lasswell (whose work is mainly media-related) proffered an operative definition: "the ensemble of practices by which one uses available resources to achieve certain valued ends". It is clear how unclear and indefensible these definitions are.

7. The use of technology involves choices and the exercise of free will. Does technology enhance our ability to exercise free will - or does it detract from it? Is there an inherent and insolvable contradiction between technology and ethical and moral percepts? Put more simply: is technology inherently unethical and immoral or a-moral? If so, is it fatalistic, or deterministic, as Thurstein Veblen suggested (in "Engineers and the Price System")? To rephrase the question; does technology DETERMINE our choices and actions? Does it CONSTRAIN our possibilities and LIMIT our potentials? We are all acquainted with utopias (and dystopias) based on technological advances (just recall the millenarian fervour with which electricity, the telegraph, railways, the radio, television and the Internet were greeted). Technology seems to shape cultures, societies, ideals and expectations. It is an ACTIVE participant in social dynamics. This is the essence of Mumford's "megamachine", the "rigid, hierarchical social organization". Contrast this with Dessauer's view of technology as a kind of moral and aesthetic statement or doing, a direct way of interacting with things-in-themselves. The latter's views place technology neatly in the Kantian framework of categorical imperatives.

8. Is technology IN ITSELF neutral? Can the the undeniable harm caused by technology be caused, as McLuhan put it, by HUMAN mis-use and abuse: "[It] is not that there is anything good or bad about [technology] but that unconsciousness of the effect of any force is a disaster, especially a force that we have made ourselves". If so, why blame technology and exonerate ourselves? Displacing the blame is a classic psychological defence mechanism but it leads to fatal behavioural rigidities and pathological thinking.

Sam

Sam Vaknin is the author of "Malignant Self Love - Narcissism Revisited" and "After the Rain - How the West Lost the East". He is a columnist in "Central Europe Review", United Press International (UPI) and ebookweb.org and the editor of mental health and Central East Europe categories in The Open Directory, Suite101 and searcheurope.com. Until recently, he served as the Economic Advisor to the Government of Macedonia.

His web site: <http://samvak.tripod.com>

ghost worlds

By mark rabusseau

ghost worlds by mark rabusseau

Hello, My name is Mark Rabusseau. I am also known as "Mark the Printer." My wife, Mary Lou and I have been hunting ghost for about 2 years now. It all started when we took a tour of haunted houses of the north side of Pittsburgh. It was not the kind of houses where someone jumped out to scare you. It was a narrated tour, where you stood in front of the house, a brief history of the house was given, along with what super natural occurrences have been experienced. We never entered the premises. That is until we came to the last house. The house was owned by Mr. DeSantis which he beautifully restored to its original Victorian Splendor. While everyone was dispersed on the first floor, I was drawn to the stair case. While I was looking up the steps, I saw a grayish mist travel across the top of the steps and through a closed door. I didn't tell my wife because she didn't believe in ghosts and would probably rib me for what I saw. After 2 hours I could not contain myself, and I had to tell her. She said that's funny, because she saw the same thing but from a different angle. She said she did not want to tell me because of all the years of saying ghost don't exists, she finally saw one. The next day we went back to Mr. DeSantis' house. Without embellishing he ask us exactly what did we see. After telling him, he said that he never told anyone on the tour about the ghost at the top of the steps. He said he had never seen it but guest in his home have reported to him that the ghost has been seen leaving the closed door and going up the stairs.

Since then Mary Lou and I have been ghost hunting with our digital camera and EMF detector. Our best luck has been on the battlefields of Gettysburg. Most of the pictures we have are of orbs which seem to be semi-translucent balls of energy. When we ghost hunt we follow a list of guidelines such as no smoking, no rain or adverse weather conditions, it must be a clear day with no dust floating around. We don't see the ghost with our eyes, but the digital camera picks up the energy they seem to produce. please view my home page at: <http://hometown.aol.com/mrrab/index.html>

printer, amateur ghost hunter

Related eBooks:

[ghost worlds](#)

[Even in the Movies](#)

[Ways To Develop Your Own Outrageously Profitable Product](#)

[Ghost Stories](#)

[The net-domain - backbone of the web](#)

Get more Free PDF eBooks at FreePDFeBooks.com

Related Products:

[My Online Friends - Dating Website Script](#)

[Speaking in Tongues - explained!!](#)

[30 Powerful Business eBooks](#)

[Net Spy Tracer](#)

[The HTML Security Report](#)

Malamaal.com: A genuine resource center for Quality Ebooks and Softwares

Co-Sponsored Advertisement:

This PDF eBook is for free Distribution only, it cannot be SOLD
An online Community Services Directory for the Mid-Columbia River Gorge

[Click here to know more](#)

Powered By FreePDFeBooks.com

[ReBrand this PDF eBook with your Name / URL / ClickBank Affiliate ID for Free](#)