

Four Sins – Manufactured Reality

We think that what we ‘think’ and ‘imagine’ is our doing, something we initiate, are clear about, sane, appropriate, and under our control. Looking closer we discover that nearly all of the content that makes up our consciousness is not original. It is conditioned, put there by someone else, often reflexive, habitual, associative, and therefore, not really “ours,” or under our control. Consider the do’s and don’ts that make up society, the language we speak, church dogma, years and years of compulsory schooling, all the media we consume, with its propaganda and consumerism. From birth the conditioning is nonstop. Somebody made up all that stuff. They, not we, are in control when we remember the songs we sing, how we dress, and we sit in the rows they taught us. Throughout the ages there has been a battle to control what and how we think, a battle that technology is intensifying, exponentially.

Imagination is the capacity of a brain to create “resonate representations,” or mental images, in response to highly abstract symbols, language and metaphors. Visual media, television, video and their digital equivalents, are preprocessed counterfeits of this capacity, a manufactured reality. Prefabricated images are absorbed, as in a hypnotic trance, directly by our ancient sensory-visual brain and assumed to be true, bypassing the much newer and advanced neocortex; thinking, reasoning, and even newer prefrontal or “wisdom” centers of the human brain. (Beyond rational thinking which is generally suspended with visual media, there are other important states of knowing. Media rarely involve these advanced functions. See; *Nine Functions of the Prefrontal Cortex*, below by Dan Siegel, MD.)

A car crash seen on the screen activates the same sensory and emotional fight-flight responses as a ‘real’ crash. The ability to script and evoke this powerful reflex, by strategically injecting behavior-shaping devices called images directly into the brain of humanity, simultaneously, throughout the world, without first cultivating the capacity to discriminate ‘real’ from ‘virtual,’ is indeed, a very great sin.

From the Four Arguments For the Elimination of Television

Jerry Mander, 1978

Replacement of Experience

America had become the first culture to substitute secondary mediated versions of experience for direct experience of the world. Interpretations and representations of the world were being accepted, as experience, and the difference between the two were obscure for most of us...

People's patterns of discernment, discrimination and understanding were taking a dive. They didn't seem able to make distinctions between information which was preprocessed and filtered through a machine, and that which came to them whole, by actual experience...

If people believed that an image of nature was equal to or even similar to the experience of nature, and were therefore satisfied enough with the image that they didn't seek out the real experience, then nature was in a lot bigger trouble than anyone realized.

The Illusion of Neutral Technology

Far from being "neutral" television itself predetermines who shall use it, how they will use it, what effects it will have, on individual lives, and if it continues to be widely used, **what sorts of political forms will inevitably emerge.**

Sensory Deprivation

Our environment itself is the manifestation of the mental processes of other humans. Of all the species of the planet, and all the cultures of the human species, we twentieth-century Americans have become the first in history to live predominately inside the projections of our own minds.

Implicit Exploitation

Television exploits a genetic fight-flight tendency in human beings. When living in pre-industrial environments we had to be aware of changes in the environment to survive. Television comes along and presents images which triggers the same survival response. If something violent is happening on television, we react. *We may be intellectually aware that the violence is not "real" but our emotions don't discriminate. They react.* It is part of our survival reflex and advertisers and programmers exploit this tendency as much as possible.

Why I wrote the book

It became very clear, observing my kids watching television, that *they were entering an artificial reality, one where people no longer remember what the world was like without television*. It is a reality cut off from the natural world - one created and controlled by a limited number of corporations to sell products people really don't need. I was very, very worried about that and with good reason. We already have a generation of people who don't know that there was ever a world without a television. They can't imagine what life would have been like without television. Look how we have moved through the technological age and how it has established a new reality, which has no relationship to the intrinsic values of nature. This is tremendously tragic and the main reason I wrote the book.

It is no longer 1978, rather 2022. Computers, the internet, and their corporate masters, go far beyond television's ability to "create a new reality that has no relationship to the intrinsic values of nature." This *manufactured reality* pushes aside what came before, without the current generation having a clue what that was. Living inside a manufactured reality compounds the consequences of David Bohm's observation; "we don't really understand our own thought process, what it is, and how it operates."

Writing a decade after Mander's *Four Arguments*, Ashley Montagu, in *The Dehumanization of Man*, 1983, describes;

The meaning of the graphic revolution was misinterpreted from the onset, and remains largely unrecognized today. What appeared to be taking place was a vast increase in our perceptions of reality; the acquisition of new sights and sounds, the ability to travel to remote lands and exotic cultures, to accompany *Life* (magazine) to war and NASA into outer space. But what was actually taking place was a steady weakening of our hold on reality and an equivalent strength of the illusory power of the replica – which eventually came to be more evocative, more colorful, and more "alive" than the original.

Behind the advertiser's pseudo truth involves something like a willing suspension of rational disbelief, and so tends to paralyze the capacity for judgment and decision... In order for our economy to continue in its present form people must learn to be fuzzy-minded and impulsive... The power that drives its manipulators lies in its irresistible impulse to simplify reality and trivialize content and in so doing to diminish public awareness and deaden private sensibility.

To be sure, this desensitizing factor did not originate with television; as far back as the forties sociologist's were drawing attention to the "narcotizing dysfunction" of the prevalent media, due to their **overload** of information on the one hand and their leitmotif (impact) of **distraction** on the other.

Our mental diets consist very largely of cultural junk food... A diet of Twinkies and Big Macs is not just lacking in culinary appeal, but in solid nutrition. It is not improbable that, in the same way as the human body may be starved and stunted to the point of deformity by glut of chemical additives and artificial substitutes in the food chain, so the human mind must in time be softened and addled by continuous spoon-feeding of synthetic imitations of life; pseudo-truths in place of information, pseudo-events in place of (organic) reality.

If the collective opinion of the multitude of viewers is not the deliberative response of a thinking public, but the knee-jerk reaction of a captive mass audience – it is reflexive, rather than reflective, its semblance of power is neither rational nor real, but only the preconditioned feedback of its master's voice.

Apply both Mander's and Montagu's insights, forty and thirty years earlier than today, to the COVID event, where a handful of people captured and shaped the consciousness and behavior of humanity for the past two years. Now, that is real power.

Six Companies Control 90% of What You Read, Watch and Hear.

Ever-mounting media consolidation has narrowed the perspectives the public is privy to. Ownership and funding of these corporations are riddled with conflicts of interest and Big Tech companies are

outright censoring and demonetizing independent outlets, notes Rebecca Strong, independent journalist.

“We can have democracy in this country, or we can have great wealth concentrated in the hands of a few, but we can’t have both.” — Supreme Court Justice Louis D. Brandeis

*In a recent Twitter survey nearly 90% of people **rated their trust in mainstream media as either “very low” or “low.”** Ever-mounting media consolidation has narrowed the perspectives the public has access to, ownership and funding of these corporations are riddled with conflicts of interest, crucial stories keep suspiciously getting buried and big tech companies are outright censoring and demonetizing independent outlets trying to break through the noise. The media is supposed to function as a power check — and a means of arming us with vital information for shaping the society we want to live in. It’s never been a more important. And it’s never been more at risk.*

[50 companies](#) dominated the media landscape in 1983, that dwindled to nine companies by the 1990s. It got worse from there. Today, just [six conglomerates](#) — Comcast, Disney, AT&T, Sony, Fox and Paramount Global (formerly known as ViacomCBS) — control 90% of what you watch, read, or listen to.

60% of journalists said they’d worked for a publication that got bought by a larger company while they were there — and 40% of that group admitted to witnessing negative changes in their job expectations or work environment after the acquisition.

Local, independent outlets are dying out. The result? The vast majority of the news you digest is tailored to serve the interests of corporations and their leaders, rather than citizens.

Around the globe a few shake their heads in amazement as our *Pavlovian Population* continue to wear masks, with zero scientific evidence of any benefit, only personal harm, walking and talking to their phones. What else do we expect? Mind control 101. We think we are using the phone, when the phone is using us, controlling us.

It is hard to imagine nature anticipating how this new capacity to imagine would cause human beings to get so lost in a self-generated enchantment, mistaking the mental image for independent realities, and then fighting, even destroying each other and the natural world as the result. But we do with compounding efficiency.

The “appearance” mental images induce, of being isolated and separated from our true nature, is a big mistake. To make matters worse, we make-believe these images are “real,” independent realities. We create a form of theater in our mind and forget we are creating the show, believing in the plot and the drama we spin. And so does everyone else, reinforcing the illusion, collusion and implicit delusion, all words emanating from the Latin *ludere*, meaning a theatrical play, in this case playing falsely with reality.

Becoming increasingly enchanted in this collusion, illusion, and shared self-deception, we don’t realize, as Krishnamurti pointed out so often; “the word is not the thing.” To be sane, true and accurate we must distinguish between the name and the thing the name represents. But we don’t, especially now that media has replaced organic imagination as the default foundation for reality.

The phrase, “sticks and stones may break my bones but names can never hurt me,” comes to mind. As with many folk, fairy tales and myths, the meaning is profound. But we only listen to the words, rarely looking through them. We don’t penetrate through the words and have a direct personal experience of the real meaning the words represent. In this “seeing through” the true nature and structure of words, language and the mental images they induce is seen, as a direct perception or “insight,” which is a different “state of mind and perception” than what habitually takes place when words enchant.

Free from enchantment, the truth that “sticks and stones may break my bones but names can never hurt me,” becomes clear, obvious. The folk phrase triggers a direct insight and that transforms the mind and its relationship to words, theoretically forever. Once we see that the coiled rope in the corner is not

a snake, it's pretty hard to believe it is a snake again. We see directly, not as an abstraction, what Bohm was describing. What we call reality distills, matures, and with that our relationship to everything.

Now, imagine, in this direct way, what this change in the mind and perception would mean to you personally, to all your relationships and how you treat the living world. This fundamental change, no longer being hypnotized by words, changes the nature of the mind, changes what we perceive. It changes reality. Words and imagination become powerful tools for play, a form of theater, used to explore and enhance our true nature, rather than we being ever-more deeply lost, misbelieving that the word *is* the thing, including our egos, bullying, racism, culture and its endless conflicts, ethnic and religious wars, genocide, environmental poisoning and destruction, and so much more.

For 10,000 years the enchantment imagined thought induces has infected every human being with compounding consequences, superseding, pushing aside, displacing and negating other states of perception, a topic we will explore next. For now, we cast our light on media and how its manufactured reality shapes and controls the minds of most, a perfect state of dull vulnerability for predators to exploit.

According to [data from DataReportal](#), the average American spends 7 hours and 4 minutes looking at a screen every day, nearly four hours less than the biggest screen-time consumers, South Africans, who average around 10 hours and 46 minutes a day. Every glance at the screen injects pre-scripted, mind and behavior influencing images directly into the brain, and, as both Mander and Montagu note, are processed by the most primitive brain centers, bypassing the "higher moral, and discriminating centers." Repeat, repeat and repeat, 7 to 10 hours a day, every week for years and, and as Ashley notes;

The multitude of viewers is not the deliberative response of a thinking public, but the knee-jerk reaction of a captive mass audience – it is reflexive, rather than reflective, its semblance of power is neither rational nor real, but only the preconditioned feedback of its master's voice.

(Counterfeit) pseudo truth (fake news or propaganda posing as news) involves... a willing suspension of rational disbelief, and so tends to paralyze the capacity for judgment and decision.

Sounds very close to what we have recently experienced, and will continue with even more hypnotic power in the future. What we think and imagine, how we interpret our own nature and relationships, rests upon the context provided by the much more ancient sensory and emotional brain centers. The neocortex and prefrontal centers are planted in, and are guided by these "primary perception" regions. The less developed and mature these centers, meaning the less connected, empathically related and entangled with life and its relationships, the more isolated, disconnected and abstracted the virtual reality our thoughts and what we imagine will grow, and with that the 'appropriateness' of our interpretations and behaviors towards life and its relationships. Returning to Jerry Mander in 1978;

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Understanding the profound implications of these clear observation, how media and compulsory schooling, one size fits all conditioning, collude in inseminating disembodied abstractions, I removed broadcast television from my home and began homeschooling my children in the early 80s. Those imperatives have grown more important each year.

The most important “insight” is that the brain centers that guide and inform what we think and imagine are not in the brain that thinks and imagines. The soil that nurtures and informs is much deeper, in the sensory and emotional centers, and upon the full development and nurturing of these, prefrontal “wisdom” unfold and guide, or not. (Attached is a rich description of the prefrontal brain development or its absence by Joseph Chilton Pearce. Sobering indeed.)

Substituting secondary mediated versions of experience, screens, digital technologies, and most importantly our phones, for direct experience of life and its entanglements, and how these experiences alter what we perceive as “reality,” can’t develop this reality changing context. Full stop. Instead of expanding human potential, and I mean “human,” what we get are emotionally abandoned children, many without a conscious, and the Transhumanist ideal of a bio-computerized utopia.

Our real challenge, drawing out of our children their true nature, rather than pouring in an abstract identity, flips our priorities back in alignment with our design, that is; to nurture, to build and support the highest, most complete ‘embodied’ foundation for knowledge and creative imagination to be used in the service of life and its wellbeing, not simply as another concept, rather as a lived experience.

Imagine creating a learning environment, form and structure, that evokes empathy, altruism, how our body and its survival is intimately entangling with every other species, egalitarianism or social equality, intrinsic morality or goodness, emotional intelligence, empathic conflict resolution, what it means to be sovereign as a state of mind and being, to be completely free of comparison without hubris and its embarrassment and shame, to express how we feel and what we need clearly and with ease, to listen without judgment, to imagine with creative passion, like a laser, and prioritize that dream in practical steps (vision and project management), to stand without aggression and face the actions of others that harm and how to perceive the same harmful intent in ourselves.

To know what basic trust feels like and be absolutely clear when it is absent, and upon that, respond in the safest way possible for everyone, to know what ecstatic joy fees like, real happiness, to see and appreciate the miracle and beauty of being a unique human being at this unique moment... and to have *this* nonabstract, embodied, self-world-view and its identity, serve as the guide for our creative imagination and actions. Put down you damn phone and do just that!

Of course, reading and mathematics are important, like tying our shoes or driving a car. But how, why, and in what ways we use these skills are predetermined and defined by these ‘nonacademic’ capacities. The real curriculum is the development of these capacities to the highest levels possible, and upon that the academic, and the ‘practical’ rest and derive meaning. First things first, and with appropriate priority and balance.

What Pearce describes is the role nurturing the sensory and emotional centers, that resonate as primary perception, serve in opening and developing the prefrontal “wisdom” centers of the human brain. No nurturing of this primary context, no, or crippled, opening and expression of prefrontal functions, something computers and digital technologies will never experience or express.

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Nine Functions of the Prefrontal Cortex

1. Bodily Regulation

Coordinates the “brakes and accelerator” (autonomic nervous system), including heart rate, respiration and digestion.

2. Attuned communication

Allows our internal state to shift, to come to resonate with the inner world of another. This allows them to “feel felt” by you.

3. Emotional Balance

We feel alive and at ease. We tread the balance between hypo- and hyper-arousal, chaos or rigidity (depression). It's the neurological basis of equanimity, the ability to stay clear and focused in all situations.

4. Response Flexibility

It puts a space between input and output, an important part of emotional and social intelligence. It allows us to weigh options before responding.

5. Fear Modulation

The middle prefrontal cortex has GABA connections to the limbic system, and will inhibit the fear response (amygdala).

6. Empathy

Allows us to map the minds of others and see through their eyes. We can sense others' intentions and what things mean to them.

7. Insight

Permits us to make "me-maps" to perceive our own minds. We're able to connect past, present and future through the nexus of "self" as constructed through the prefrontal cortex.

8. Moral Awareness

Enables us to reflect on and enact behaviors for the social good.

9. Intuition

Gives us access to the "wisdom" of the body. The insula represents how things are going throughout the body, enabling our "heartfelt sense" and "gut feelings." This integrative function illustrates how thinking is not just a cerebral event. We transcend logic alone to encompass wisdom.

Daniel, Siegel M.D.

