

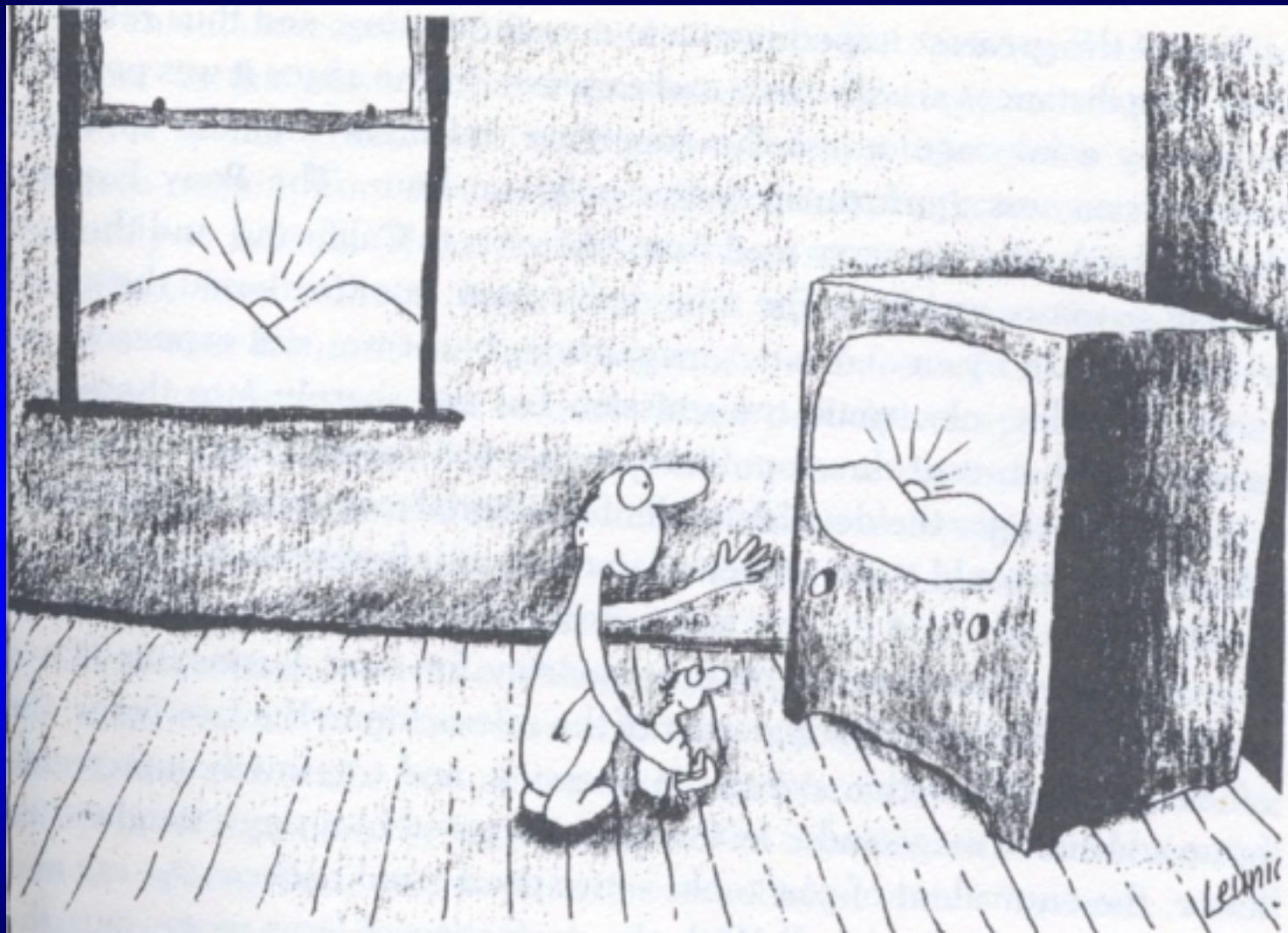
The Challenge of a Technological Society to Christian Community



- **Ours is a civilization committed to the quest for continually improved means to carelessly examined ends.**

--Jacques Ellul





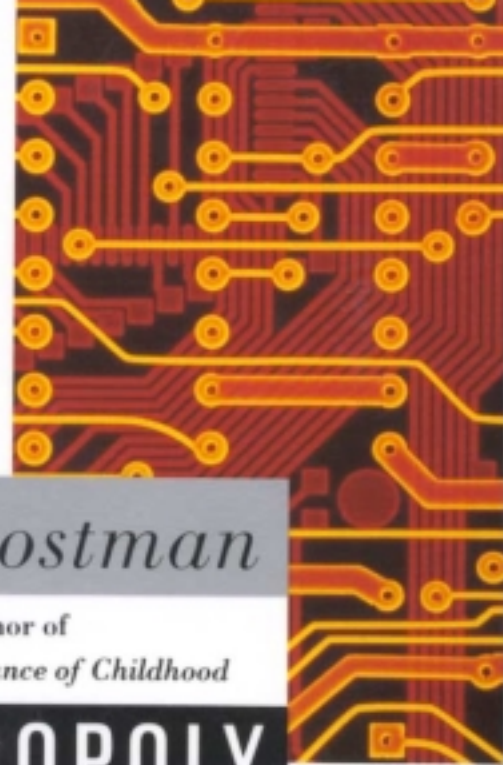


David is 11 years old.
He weighs 60 pounds.
He is 4 feet, 6 inches tall.
He has brown hair.

His love is real.
But he is not.



A STEVEN SPIELBERG FILM
ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE



Neil Postman

author of

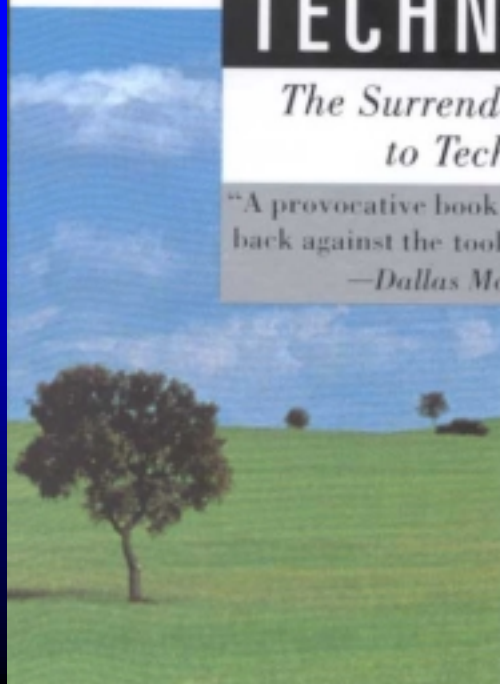
The Disappearance of Childhood

TECHNOPOLY

*The Surrender of Culture
to Technology*

"A provocative book . . . a tool for fighting
back against the tools that run our lives."

—*Dallas Morning News*



“Technopoly”

- **“The Technopoly story is without a moral center. It puts in its place efficiency, interest, and economic advance. It promises heaven on earth through the conveniences of technological progress. It casts aside all traditional narratives and symbols that suggest stability and orderliness and tells, instead, of a life of skills, technical expertise, and the ecstasy of consumption. Its purpose is to produce functionaries of an ongoing technopoly.” (Postman, *Technopoly*, 179)**



The Kosmos Impulse

- **Gen. 11:1** Now the whole earth used the same language and the same words. 2 And it came about as they journeyed east, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar and settled there.
- 3 And they said to one another, “Come, let us make bricks and burn them thoroughly.” And they used brick for stone, and they used tar for mortar. 4 And they said, “Come, let us build for ourselves a city, and a tower whose top will reach into heaven, and let us make for ourselves a name; lest we be scattered abroad over the face of the whole earth.”
- **CF. Gen 12:1-3**

The Kosmos Impulse

- 5 And the Lord came down to see the city and the tower which the sons of men had built.
- 6 And the Lord said, “Behold, they are one people, and they all have the same language. And this is what they began to do, and now nothing which they purpose to do will be impossible for them.”
- 7 “Come, let Us go down and there confuse their language, that they may not understand one another’s speech.” 8 So the Lord scattered them abroad from there over the face of the whole earth; and they stopped building the city.

▪ “To proud, humanist man, who demands to be autonomous, technology of one kind or another is to be used to get rid of the limitations of nature, *including human nature*, which autonomous man finds insufferably confining.”

» Francis Schaeffer, *How Should We Then Live?*

What is I.T. ?

- **Oral Language**
- **Writing**
- **Printing Press**
- **Telegraph**
- **Radio**
- **Telephone**
- **TV & Cinema**
- **VCR's, CD & DVD players**
- **PC's**
- **The World Wide Web**
- **PDA's**
- **Cell phones**
- **Digital Cameras**

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Each introduces an “ecological” change

The *combination* of these technologies has created a whole new culture

The Extremes

Technophobes-----Technophiles

Technorealism

- Technology is not neutral. It often has unforeseen consequences

- » **Stirrup**

- » **Printing**

- » **Clock**

- » **TV**

Presuppositions Involved

- **“Digitopian” view of Progress vs. Biblical Realism**
- **Pragmatic vs. Principled (“Can” overtakes “Should”)**
- **Adaptation (Evolution) vs. God’s design for Human Beings**
- **Creating and controlling your own world vs. Living submissively in God’s**

The Prejudices of Technophiles

- **The New Over the Old**
- **The Future Over the Past**
- **The Fast Over the Slow**
- **The Immediate Over the Long-term**
- **The Image Over the Word**
- **The Active Over the Reflective**

Worldviews and the Conduit of American Culture



6 Ways IT Can be Corrosive to Vital Community

**The Christian Community under
pressure**

**The non-Christians we seek to
reach are increasingly
fragmented relationally**

6 Ways IT Can be Corrosive to Vital Community

1. **Because healthy community requires a basis in truth and a confident assurance of the truth, it is threatened by IT's tendency toward postmodernism, cynicism and nihilism (Col. 1:4-6)**
 - **Because healthy community requires available & content people, it is threatened by IT's tendency to produce lust for more and better IT devices & services (Rom 12:10,11; 2 Cor. 11:28, 29; Heb. 10:24, 25; 13:5,6; Col. 3:5)**

6 Ways IT Can be Corrosive to Vital Community

3. Because healthy community requires the sharing of precious resources (emotional energy, time and finances), it is threatened by IT's power to distract—causing a squandering of these resources (Heb. 13:16; 2 Cor. 9:6)

6 Ways IT Can be Corrosive to Vital Community

4. **Because healthy community requires patience, it is threatened by IT's lust for speed (Ps. 37:7; 40:1; Col. 1:11; 3:12, 13**

Hyperculture

THE HUMAN COST OF SPEED

Stephen Bertman

“The *power of now* replaces the long-term with the sort-term, duration with immediacy, permanence with transience, memory with sensation, insight with impulse.”

6 Ways IT Can be Corrosive to Vital Community

4. Because healthy community requires patience, it is threatened by IT's lust for speed (Ps. 37:7; 40:1; Col. 1:11; 3:12, 13)
5. Because healthy community requires focus and listening skills, it is threatened by IT's tendency toward entertainment and stimulation (Gal. 6:2; Rom. 12:15; Acts 20:31; 1 Thess. 2:8)

- **“Those conditioned by the amusement mentality become intellectually impatient and develop shortened attention spans; they also come to expect that reality out to be amusing.”**
- **Groothuis, *The Soul in Cyberspace*, 17**

6 Ways IT Can be Corrosive to Vital Community

6. Because healthy community requires investment in face-to face communication, it is threatened by IT's disembodied, fragmented communication (1 Thess. 2:17,18; 3:6,10,11; 3 Jn. 13, 14)

IT

- Because
investm
is threat
fragmen
2:17,18;

2:17 But we were all the more eager with great desire to see your face. 18 For we wanted to come to you—I, Paul, more than once—and *yet* Satan thwarted us...

3:6 But now that Timothy has come to us from you, and has brought us good news... longing to see us just as we also long to see you...

3:10 as we night and day keep praying most earnestly that we may see your face, and may complete what is lacking in you

3:11 Now ma
our Lord dire

3 Jn. 13 I had many things to write to you, but I am not willing to write them to you with pen and ink; 14 but I hope to see you shortly, and we shall speak face to face.

Jesus

- **"Human interaction at the deepest level involves at least two participants who acknowledge and respond to each other's spoken questions, comments, and exclamations as well as the nonverbal language of embodied articulation--the raised eyebrow, the squinting eye, the furrowed brow, the misty eyes, the nodding or shaking of the head. These irreducibly personal factors and many others--such as spontaneity and humor--make up a conversation, a dialogue, in which no machine can participate." (Groothius, 152)**

Directions

- **To more effectively serve God by cultivating an attitude of “technorealism”**
 - » Using IT to *supplement* our communication
 - » Discerning the subtle and negative effects of IT in order to recover a more “designed” existence
 - » Living out an alternative to “Technopoly” in a community grounded in truth before a world that is increasingly surrendered to IT

Practical Communication

Understanding your audience

- Has absorbed a PM perspective without really thinking about it
- Thinks not so much that Christianity is false as it is *strange*
- Is information-saturated
- Has a consumer mindset
- Is used to being entertained and
- These are challenges, but can be met
 - » Because reality is better than virtual reality
 - » Because love relationships are what people are looking for

Don't cater to this;

Deepen and display biblical community

Communication Strategies

- **Ideas for Using Technology in Discussion**
- **Goals**
 - » **To prompt nonxians to examine their worldview, to think about design, ethics and the basis for ethics**
 - » **To challenge xians about conformity to the world and slow down**

Communication Strategies

■ Christian Small Group Discussion

- » Your text(s)
- » Romans 12:2; 1 Jn. 2:15
- » Questions
- » Most Christians would argue that the world and culture are *not* morally neutral. But is technology neutral?
- » When as Christians we resist the values of the world, do we think about the values that information technology prefers and reinforces?
- » Are you aware of some of the ways that technology has had unintended consequences?

Communication Strategies

- **Christian Small Group Discussion**

- » *Television*

- » Most Christians are focused only on the content of TV without little thought for the biases of *the medium itself*. What do you see as the weaknesses of TV as a medium (regardless of the content)?

- » How do you think the form of TV affects how we perceive the “news of the day?”

Communication Strategies

- **Christian Small Group Discussion**
 - » *The Internet*
 - » **Other than online porn and hate groups, have you thought about the dangers of the internet?**

C & C's

- **Tech and community**
- **What is technology? Information Technology?**
- **What is community?**
- **In what ways can IT strengthen community?**
- **In what ways can IT weaken community?**

C & C's

- **Compare being “connected” with people all over the world with being connected with people in your home and neighborhood through face- to-face contact and trust.**
- **Is it possible to be “connected” to too many people on the Web and to be connected to few people in your home and neighborhood?**

C & C's

- **Does technology change our expectations of speed in human interaction?**
- **Do time saving devices free us to have more time for community?**
- **When I am always connected am I free to give my attention to those I'm physically with?**
- **The limits of e-mail; Are you as honest in e-mail as you would be in person? Too honest?**
- **To what extent does communication require face-to-face talk?**
- **Is communication simply exchanging information? Or is it shared emotions: Laughing, crying, etc. Being with people?**
- **Sharing common values as well as diversity? _**

C & C's

- **Technology: slave or master?**
 - » **The sense that we have no choice**
 - » **TV; Radio; VCR/DVD; Computer & Internet; Cell phone; Palm Pilot**
 - » **Do these technologies take a lot of our time? What are the pay-offs? Costs?**
 - » **Are we able to refuse any of these or minimize their intrusion?**

Readings

- Postman, *Technopoly; Amusing Ourselves to Death*
- Shenk, *Data Smog*
- Bertman, *Hyperculture*
- Grootius, *The Soul in Cyberspace*
- Mars Hill Audio (marshillaudio.org)