

I am going to begin today with a quote from Marshall McLuhan from his 1962 book, *The Gutenberg Galaxy*:

“Instead of tending toward a vast Alexandrian library the world has become a computer, an electronic brain, exactly as an infantile piece of science fiction. And as our senses have gone outside us, Big Brother goes inside.”

I would *like* to come to you today with a message of unity and love and peace, and I will try to get there by the end, but I have to begin by stating a fact that must be becoming obvious to most people by now- the fact that we are in a battle, a battle for the survival of our species, and our enemy, is within.

Three weeks ago in a landmark report on disinformation and fake news, the British parliament said that Facebook and other big tech companies "should be subject to a compulsory code of ethics to tackle ... the abuse of users' data and the bullying of smaller firms.”

The report says, "Companies like Facebook should not be allowed to behave like 'digital gangsters' in the online world, considering themselves to be ahead of and beyond the law.”

The Guardian wrote that this is the first “comprehensive attempt of a major legislative body to peer into the ... economy of data manipulation and voter influence.”

Damian Collins, chair of the parliament’s Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Committee said, "The guiding principle of the 'move fast and break things' culture [is] that it is better to apologize than ask permission. We need a radical shift in the balance of power between the platforms and the people.”

In The New Yorker’s February 25, 2019 report titled *Private Mossad for Hire*, Uzi Shaya, a former senior Israeli intelligence officer, said, “Social media allows you to reach virtually anyone and to play with their minds. You can do whatever you want. You can be whoever you want. It’s a place where wars are fought, elections are won, and terror is promoted. There are no regulations. It is a no man’s land.”

Marshall McLuhan began his work as a follower of the French Catholic idealist philosopher, Pierre Teilhard de Chardin. Teilhard believed that the electronic universe was an extension of our nervous systems and would knit us together into a godhead, which he called “the Omega Point”. McLuhan, also a Catholic, started there, but by the end of his life, he believed that the

electronic universe was a “blatant manifestation of the Antichrist”. Satan, he said, “is a very great electric engineer.”

*The Internet has failed.*

Here is a quote from Tim Berners-Lee, who drew the original diagram for the world wide web on a napkin, and who now has Dr. Frankenstein’s remorse.

“We demonstrated that the Web had failed instead of served humanity, as it was supposed to have done, and failed in many places. [The Web] has ended up producing—with no deliberate action of the people who designed the platform—a large-scale emergent phenomenon which is *anti-human*.”

As the Internet pioneer Ethan Zuckerman of MIT recently wrote, “It’s obvious now that what we did was a fiasco, so let me remind you that what we wanted to do was something brave and noble.” What they wanted to do was to create a communication system that was decentralized and cooperative. One of the early networks that Stewart Brand and Ken Kesey built was called the Whole Earth Lectronic Link. That’s how utopian their aspirations were. But today there is a growing understanding that the internet has morphed into an insidious surveillance and propaganda machine.

Berners-Lee has said he is “devastated” by what his creation has become, and he is working to “re-decentralize” the web with a new project he calls Solid. I sincerely wish him the best of luck, but from where I stand, we would do well to scrap this first internet project- we should break up these advertising platform monopolies, and we should start from scratch to build an electronic communications system founded on hard and fast ethics rather than utopian fantasies.

(Thomas More coined the word Utopia from two Greek words- eutopia, which meant a good place and outopia, which meant no place at all.)

By now, it is clear that what was begun as a mission to connect and unite mankind has mutated into a pernicious distortion machine that has *disconnected* mankind and put us at each other’s throats, and in doing so has destroyed and is destroying institutions and knowledge that have taken centuries to develop.

As my friend Roger McNamee says, at this point it is all the rest of us against the 130,000 or so employees of Facebook and Google, whose objective it is to hybridize us with machines. Ray Kurzweil, Google’s Director of Engineering, predicts that humans will be hybrids by the year 2030. Their goal is to automate us.

In the beginning of the last century, Sigmund Freud's nephew, Edward Bernays, realized that he could use his uncle's concepts- such as the understanding that we are driven to act by unconscious impulses- to control and manipulate mass culture.

At the beginning of the first world war, Bernays was the press agent for Enrico Caruso, plying the trade that was then called propaganda. He had run many successful campaigns, and as the United States entered the war, he worked for Woodrow Wilson to promote the idea that we were fighting not to restore the old empires of Europe, but rather to "Make the world safe for democracy." By positioning Wilson as the "Liberator of the people, who would create a new world where the individual would be free", he was able to make Wilson a hero of the masses.

The throngs that greeted Wilson upon his arrival at the Paris Peace talks gave Bernays the insight that if this sort of mass manipulation could be used during war, it could be used during peace.

After the war, with the Germans giving propaganda a bad name, Bernays rebranded his practice, opening the Council on Public Relations- a phrase he coined- and began working for various corporations including the American Tobacco Corporation. At the time there was a taboo against

women smoking and Bernays was asked to break that taboo so that the company could sell more cigarettes.

During the 1929 Easter parade around Central Park in New York, Bernays arranged for a group of debutantes to hide cigarettes under their clothes and, at an arranged corner, pull out and light what he called “Torches of Freedom”. Having notified the international press of the event, there were scores of photographers- including ones hired by Bernays- at that corner, and the pictures went out all over the world. In that one symbolic act, he was able to link a woman’s right to smoke with a woman’s right to vote- with the Women’s Liberation Movement. He linked a woman smoking a cigarette with the Statue of Liberty. Those pictures *snapped* the world.

*This devious process has now been mechanized and automated.*

Until England recently joined the fray, Germany had been leading the world on the extreme dangers of the Facebook and Google monopolies, because Germany in the 1920’s, was the first country to fall into a propaganda created mass hypnosis. The Germans have *felt* it.

Historian Robert Ensor wrote at the time that “Hitler puts no limit on what can be done by propaganda; people will believe anything, provided

they are told it often enough and emphatically enough, and that contradicters are either silenced or smothered in calumny.”

This, of course, is all too familiar.

To stay human, to survive as a species, we have to wrest our communications out of the control of the lust for power, the avarice, larceny, hubris, deceit and self-delusion of the heads of Google and Facebook.

I am *confident* that we can do this. Six years ago my friend Jon Taplin, and I spoke at a conference at MIT. We caused a lot of trouble because of our assertion that musicians have the right to determine how and where their music is distributed. The Free Culture sect was in ascendance on campuses then, but things have changed.

The chronicle of reform movements demonstrates that history is made by abrupt transitions. The 1890's are remembered as the Gilded Age, where plutocrats like J. P. Morgan and John D. Rockefeller asserted control over the U.S. economy and politics. By 1906, both Rockefeller and Morgan were being forced by antitrust regulators to break up their vast holdings. When I gave the keynote address at the Americana Music Festival addressing the problem of

the tech monopolies in the fall of 2016, I thought we were in 1896, not 1906.

But today, just three years later, we are, in fact, at the beginning of a profound change in how we view tech monopolies. Since that time, the German led European Union has fined Google 7.7 billion dollars- American- the largest anti-trust fines in history- for abusing its search monopoly, the British parliament has picked up the torch, and there is increasing evidence that American politicians and regulators are open to new regulation of these tech monopolies. Within the next six months the FCC will probably fine Facebook billions of dollars for the Cambridge Analytica breach. This is in part because the mounting evidence of the destructive role that both Facebook and Google played in the American election of 2016 proved to be one of the primary causes of Individual One's so called victory.

But the crisis Facebook and Google have created goes *way* beyond the election. We have come to the realization that we have entrusted them with our most intimate data, and that *they are not worthy of that trust*. They have betrayed our trust by engineering their platforms to be addictive, and by making enormous fortunes selling- monetizing “in the parlance of our times”, to quote Maude



Lebowski- surreptitiously selling those data that we have unknowingly handed over to them for free, for *nothing*.

Stewart Brand is often quoted as saying. “Information wants to be free.” The other half of the quotation, always omitted by the Free Culture sect is, “Information wants to be expensive, because it's so valuable. The right information in the right place changes your life.”

I have come here today to this right place to bring you a right piece of information.

*Your information is extremely valuable.*

To realize that, all you have to do is look at the valuations of the companies that have been confiscating your information and making vast fortunes without compensation to you, the owners of that information, companies that have instead manipulated you and your friends and families *by* that information.

If we search the internet we find that Facebook is worth somewhere around 475 billion dollars. Google is worth about 785 billion, give or take a few billion- together, about a trillion and a quarter dollars.

This- and much, much more- is what your collective information is worth. In fact, there is no way to put a monetary value on something such as privacy for which the intrinsic value is immeasurable.

Mark Zuckerberg tells us the age of privacy is over. At Harvard, he started what was then called Facemash as a place to rate girls by their pictures- which had been stolen from student housing directories- girls who were, I am certain, thrilled to be rated by the Ivy League incel community. Here is part of a text conversation between him and one of his friends outlining how he was planning to deal with his competition, the website Harvard Connect:

FRIEND: so have you decided what you are going to do about the websites?

ZUCK: yea i'm going to fuck them

ZUCK: probably in the year

ZUCK: \*ear

ZUCK: yea so if you ever need info about anyone at harvard

ZUCK: just ask

ZUCK: i have over 4000 emails, pictures, addresses, sns

FRIEND: what!?! how'd you manage that one?

ZUCK: people just submitted it

ZUCK: i don't know why

ZUCK: they "trust me"

ZUCK: dumb fucks

Having been exposed, he now claims to have grown and changed, but by now we have profound evidence that he has not, and in fact, his lust for power has made him worse, has made him into a James Bond villain.

He may be Zuckerberg, but make no mistake- you are the mark.

The Fourth Amendment to the Constitution of the United States asserts that the right of the people to be secure in their persons, houses, papers, and effects, against unreasonable searches and seizures, shall not be violated. Well, unreasonable searches and seizures are Google and Facebook's business models.

There are laws against phone tapping, yet on the internet, all communications are tapped, at all times, with impunity.

This has been an *epic* invasion of privacy.

While he buys up all the houses around his house to protect *his* privacy, neither he nor any of the other one dimensional Randian intellectual lightweights in Silicon Valley get to declare that the age of privacy is over.

It is time for him and them to get out of our lives, out of our private lives, out of our common life.

Theirs is a fundamental miscalculation. They don't know the difference between connection and disconnection. They don't know the difference between information and disinformation. They don't know the difference between creation and destruction.

Information does not want anything. We want information.

But as the tech companies have made vast fortunes selling our information, they have hidden from us the crucial information we need to survive as a species.

*These technologists lack humanity.*

This era- an era marked by a new field of economics called Surveillance Capitalism- has been a *global* revenge of the nerds.

For those to whom surveillance capitalism is a new term, here is Shoshana Zuboff's definition of that term from her mighty book, *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism*:

- 1 A new economic order that claims human experience as free material for hidden commercial practices of extraction, prediction, and sales;
- 2 A parasitic economic logic in which the production of goods and services is subordinated to a new global architecture of behavioral modification;
- 3 A rogue mutation of capitalism marked by concentrations of wealth, knowledge, and power unprecedented in human history;
- 8 An extrapolation of critical human rights that is best understood as a coup from above: an overthrow of the people's sovereignty.

The goal of technology is to create efficiency.

The goal of art is to create conscience.

Art is not efficient.

Efficiency is not an attribute of the good.

Efficiency can be efficient for good or evil, but as it has worked out in practice, efficiency would seem to be a prime attribute of evil.

*Without conscience, efficiency has the potential for apocalyptic evil.*

These surveillance capitalists do not have the ethical foundation to be able to order society as they have presumed to do.

*They lack conscience.*

I will stay with the artists. Artists contain the accumulated knowledge of generations. Artists *create* conscience. The artists are our only hope.

The sciences have failed us. The churches have failed us. The politicians have failed us.

I am here today to *strongly* encourage all of you artists to not give in to the extreme intimidation of a sad group of very rich, emotionally and intellectually stunted people who threaten to destroy centuries of human experience and hard won knowledge, who threaten to destroy our race- the only race we have, the human race- but instead to stand up for yourselves, *to stand up for humanity*.

Abraham Lincoln said, "America will never be destroyed from the outside. If we falter and lose our freedoms, it will be because we destroyed ourselves." Dr Martin Luther King, Jr said, "And one of the great liabilities of life is that all too many people find themselves living amid a great period of social change, and yet they fail to develop the new attitudes, the new mental responses, that the new situation demands. They end up sleeping through a revolution." We

must ask ourselves, are we sleeping through the Surveillance Capitalism Revolution?

Our understanding of the Internet as a propaganda machine rather than simply a benign, ever-flowing source of information changed in 2016. Jacques Ellul defined propaganda this way, “an inner control over the individual by a social force, which means that it deprives him of himself”.

Please think of this talk as a prayer that we become reunited with our selves.

At about the same time as Bernays was fusing his uncle’s innovations with propaganda, the Russian psychologist, Ivan Pavlov, began researching the responses of dogs to being fed that led to our understanding of conditioned responses.

If the dog would be fed accompanied by the ringing of a bell, soon the dog would begin to salivate merely at the ringing of a bell, if no food was present.

*We are also susceptible to this sort of manipulation.*

On social media, the *like* is the bell ringing.

In 1938, Orson Welles produced a radio play of the HG Wells novel, *War of the Worlds*, which led to a national panic that we were being invaded by aliens (from outer space), demonstrating the power of media to manipulate the mass unconscious, or to put it more clearly, to manipulate masses of people without their being conscious they were being manipulated. With the mechanized, automated electronic programming capabilities of today, we can see how easy it has become to fabricate- for millions of credulous people- an alien (not from outer space) invasion.

Rush Limbaugh's rise paralleled that of Ronald Reagan. Fox News was launched in 1996 and was in enough markets by 2000 to help elect our boy, George Bush. But the hijacking of social media as a propaganda organ is distinctly different from partisan radio and television.

Our smartphones are with us every waking hour, whereas television and radio are not regularly ingested in our workplaces. We check our phones 150 times per day and facebook alone gets fifty-four minutes of our time per day.

But *big* changes will happen if we approach the problem of monopolization of the Internet with honesty, a sense of history, and a



determination to protect what we all agree is important: our cultural inheritance. We all need the access to information the Internet provides, but we need to be able to share information about ourselves with our friends without unwittingly supporting a corporation's profits.

Facebook and Google must be willing to alter their business models to protect our privacy and help thousands of artists create a sustainable culture for the centuries, not just make a few software designers billionaires.

In the 1998 Digital Millennium Copyright Act (DMCA §512), the telecom giants, AT&T, Verizon, et al, negotiated a liability shield for copyright infringement called the Safe Harbor Provision, which stipulated that the digital platforms were not responsible for the material posted on their platforms. This was an *unwise* decision.

Among other serious problems, it allowed YouTube to become a massive infringement machine that made tens of billions of dollars for its owners while returning between nothing and a small fraction of that money, to the owners of the material posted on their platform.

It also led to the posting of tens of thousands of Isis and Ku Klux Klan recruitment videos, as well as thriving pedophilia

communities with untold thousands of photographs and videos of schoolchildren, among other horrors.

*The Safe Harbor provision needs to be amended. Now.*

Without the Safe Harbor provision, these Surveillance Capitalists would have to protect and defend their platforms, and in doing so, protect and defend us.

If artists do not want their work on YouTube or Facebook for free, they should be able to file a takedown notice, and then it would become the responsibility of the platform to block that content from ever being uploaded. All the tools needed to make this happen already exist.

Second, we need to reform our privacy regulations. The EU is taking the lead on this with their General Data Protection Regulation act (GDPR) which went into effect in early 2018. The U.S. should follow the European leadership on this front.

But we also must understand that the people who run Google, Facebook, et cetera, are just at the beginning of a long project to change our world, so this battle has only just begun. Yuval Noah Harari, author of *Sapiens*, calls their project Dataism:

“Dataists further believe that given enough biometric data and computing power, this all-encompassing system could understand humans much better than we understand ourselves. Once that happens, humans will lose their authority, and humanist practices such as democratic elections will become as obsolete as rain dances and flint knives.”

We need to confront this techno-determinism with real solutions, before it is too late. An autonomous technology has taken over the traditional values of all our cultures and rendered the differences among them superficial. This has led to disruptions and schisms in crucial parts of our lives- the arts, education, journalism, politics, and others, but most alarmingly, in our selves. Marshall McLuhan said that a medium surrounds a previous medium and turns the previous medium into an art form, as film did with novels, as television did with film, and as the internet has now done with television.

Through the technological advances of the last century, from radio to film to television and now to the world wide web, we have

become deft at the treacherous processes of programming and conditioning.

As you know, programmers make programs, and what they do is called programming. Today, we have programs and programmers everywhere. Where we once had radio programmers and television programs, billions of people now are turning themselves into programmers, and- more significantly- into programs.

As one result of this programming pandemic, we are losing the ability to discern fact from fiction.

Another result is that large segments of our societies are subjects of mass hypnosis.

I undertake the pursuit of the solutions to these problems with optimism, because I believe in the power of music, paintings, theater, books, and movies- the power of art- to change the world. As the writer Toni Morrison observed, “The history of art, whether it’s in music or written or what have you, has always been bloody, because dictators and people in office and people who want to control and deceive know exactly the people who will disturb their plans. And those people are artists. They’re the ones that sing the truth. And that is something that society has got to protect.” I know that brave and

passionate art is worth protecting and is more than just click bait for global advertising monopolies. Art is not information. Art is above information. Art changes everything.

The last ten years have seen the wholesale destruction of the creative economy—journalists, musicians, authors, and filmmakers—wrought by parasitic tech monopolies. The monopolies' dominance in Artificial Intelligence will extend this *creative destruction* to much of the service economy, including transportation, medicine, and retail.

There is not a single politician in America talking about this and, when the flood of unemployment brought about by the Artificial Intelligence revolution is upon us, we will not be ready. Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin was recently quoted as saying that the robotics and AI revolution would not arrive for 100 years. He said, “I think that is so far in the future—in terms of Artificial Intelligence taking over American jobs—I think we’re, like, so far away from that that it is not even on my radar screen.”

His radar screen is blank. In actual fact, he has no radar screen. That is an imbecilic statement.

Mnuchin's former employer, Goldman Sachs, recently reported that self-driving cars could eliminate 300,000 jobs per year starting

in 2022. Both sides of this argument cannot be true, but we are forging ahead with a vision of an AI universe with almost no political debate. We know this is true because of the deafening silence from the politicians in the last ten years, as 50 percent of the jobs in journalism were eliminated and revenues at both music companies and newspapers fell by 70 percent. Who was there to speak for the creative workers of the world?

The companies that will win the AI race will be the companies that are already in the forefront: Google, Facebook, and Amazon. As AI venture capitalist Kai-Fu Lee recently wrote, “AI is an industry in which strength begets strength: The more data you have, the better your product; the better your product, the more data you can collect; the more data you can collect, the more talent you can attract; the more talent you can attract, the better your product.”

These companies are already pushing out of tech into other sectors of the economy, as Amazon’s acquisition of Whole Foods demonstrates. Google’s life sciences division, Verily, is producing glucose-monitoring contact lenses for diabetics, wrist computers that read diagnostic nanoparticles injected into the blood stream, implantable devices that modify electrical signals that pass along

nerves, medication robots, human augmentation and human brain simulation devices. Google's autonomous car division is already working with Avis to manage their forthcoming self-driving car fleet. As for Facebook's brand extension plans into video, they recently bid \$800 million for the worldwide rights to broadcast Indian Cricket on their platform, only to be outbid by Rupert Murdoch's Star India. These are just the start of many initiatives to extend the tech giants' technologies into many parts of the American economy.

We need a communications system that is not dependent on surveillance marketing and that allows creative artists to take advantage of the zero-marginal-cost economics of the Web. I have no illusion that the existing business structures of cultural marketing will change and/or go away, but we can build a parallel structure that will benefit all creators. The only way this will happen is if, in Peter Thiel's "deadly race between politics and technology," the people's voice (politics) wins. The leaders of Google and Facebook may seem to some like benevolent plutocrats, but, in fact, they are malevolent and without ethics. On top of that, the time for plutocracy is over.

Neil Postman wrote, “Those who cultivate competence in the use of a new technology become an elite group that are granted undeserved authority and prestige by those who have no such competence.”

Orwell feared that the truth would be hidden from us.

Huxley feared that the truth would be drowned in a sea of irrelevance.

They were both right.

We cannot and will not allow the tyranny of the programs and programmers of these electronic philistines to destroy us.

So, understanding the lesson of the propagandists that people are driven to act not by information, but rather by emotion, I pray that this talk has touched your emotions.

To that end, I will leave you with two short poems by Czeslaw Milosz, the first is *You Who Wronged*.



You who wronged a simple man  
Bursting into laughter at the crime,  
And kept a pack of fools around you  
To mix good and evil, to blur the line,

Though everyone bowed down before you,  
Saying virtue and wisdom lit your way,  
Striking gold medals in your honor,  
Glad to have survived another day,

Do not feel safe. The poet remembers.

You can kill one, but another is born.

The words are written down, the deed, the date.

And you'd have done better with a winter dawn,  
A rope, and a branch bowed beneath your weight.

Now, I'm going to reprogram you. Here is Milosz in a better mood in  
his poem, *Gift*.

A day so happy.

Fog lifted early, I worked in the garden.

Hummingbirds were stopping over honeysuckle flowers.

There was no thing on earth I wanted to possess.

I knew no one worth envying him.

Whatever evil I had suffered, I forgot.

To think that once I was the same man did not embarrass me.

In my body I felt no pain.

When straightening up, I saw the blue sea and sails.

Poetry rings to the high heavens.

*We cannot and will not trade art, privacy, and our souls for the banal trivialities that the surveillance capitalists offer us.*

In 2012, when we raised these issues at MIT, no one was listening. Now, people are paying attention. We are advancing to higher ground. But the journey is not finished. As Dr. King said, “I may not get there with you, but I believe in the promised land.”

The goal of art is to create conscience.

*You* are equal to the task.

Thank you, love to you, and may God bless and keep you always.