

New Media Epidemic

Intro

“The main aim of this work is to diagnose the different pathologies provoked by the new media in the hope of showing the scale of the problem to those who have been blinded by the general elation that has come with these developments. To know the different forms of the sickness and their causes is clearly an essential stage in their cure.” (Chap. 13)

Addicts of Modern Media

read intro

Invasion

“media” has been used for years for the press, radio and television

“new media” refers to more recent means of communication using the digital techniques developed with the computer

so networked computers, tablets, smartphones

all “screens”

“Digital media have progressively invaded every kind of activity and every part of our public and private lives.”

“If you can, you must.”

“Digital colonialism” applies equally to any object or activity whatsoever.

“Everyone is pushed firmly by society to use the new media.”

main pressure is commercial

government’s altruism “reduce the digital divide between different classes of citizens” “no corner of the land must be left without coverage for the Internet, the portable phone, and the television, lest some should be excluded and disadvantaged.”

Television: (1949-2019)

99% France and US, 85% in Africa

often more than one

average 4 hours per day

Children more deeply dependent than adults

not supplanted by new media

“Only a few are able to resist. They are generally in the higher social classes and, motivated by religious, intellectual, or cultural considerations, seek to protect their children from bad examples and evil influence that may distract them from their school work or from more cultivated and social pursuits.”

Lillian Lurcat: “The television molds a child from birth. It implants its message unhindered, for the child has no experience which could counter its effects and the restraint imposed by adults is minimal. The social effects of the media are yet more powerful, for they capture the imagination, seducing and

shaping it, by associating what they show with the fulfillment of the basic needs of daily life such as eating and relaxing.”

Video Games

stats show 13 year old boy spends average 2.31 hrs per day—9.6% of life
originally stand alone
now interactive

Computer

originally for work
main enabler of media
first portables, then laptops, then tablets, finally smartphones
“I would estimate my iPhone 6s (really dated) as somewhere between 10,000 and 20,000 times more powerful than the first IBM mainframe I used in 1967.”

Smartphone

(2019) 7 billion for a world population of 7.5 billion
continually compelled to replace with newer model
inner factors: need to be as others, to be reassured in a world which seems unknown and menacing, means of self-promotion, palliative for boredom and loneliness

Internet

“70% of users spend average 4.8 hours on computer and 2.1 hours on smartphone”
215 billion emails every day

Social Networks

Facebook, Snapchat, Twitter, YouTube and whatever else

Text Messages

“the main driver(s) of addiction to mobile phones whose use as telephones has become secondary.”
70% of smartphone users check their messages every 5 minutes.

Connected Devices

everything from home monitoring, to household device control,

and with the rise of AI, there is no telling how far this will go...

When the Medium Replaces the Message

“The medium itself has a much bigger impact than the message on people’s thoughts and way of life. The message changes all the time, which reduces its impact and leaves it with a merely relative importance. But the medium creates a permanent structure, which leaves a deep imprint in society and its members and little by little changes them.”

McLuhan: “It is sometimes a bit of a shock to be reminded that, in operational and practical fact, the medium is the message. This is merely to say that the personal and social consequences of any medium—that is, of any extension of ourselves—result from the new scale that is introduced into our affairs by each extension of ourselves, or by any new technology.”

Nicholas Carr, *The Shallows*: “One thing is very clear. If, knowing what we do today about the brain’s plasticity, you were to set out to invent a medium that would rewire our mental circuits as quickly and thoroughly as possible, you would probably end up designing something that looks and works a lot like the Internet...It’s the most powerful (thing) that has come along since the book.”

“Our intellectual and spiritual lives, the way we relate to ourselves, to others, and to God, are all changed so much that a new type of human being emerges: *homo connecticus*.”

The tyranny of the New Mediators

Confiscation of Personal Life

what to watch

what to buy

trust in “big data collected by large corporations that run the new media.”

all controlled material needs and cultural choices

“It follows from the above that the new media have created a system of estrangement never seen before, while projecting the illusion that they increase our power and freedom.”

Shrinking Distance and Time

“For my days have disappeared like smoke (Ps. 101:4)

A False Impression of Freedom and Omnipotence

“elimination of distances does not abolish space itself, and virtual contacts or encounters create new distances.”

“we lose the psychological and spiritual benefits of waiting: patience, the increase of desire and joy, and the feelings that come from delayed satisfaction”

Delegation of Time Management to the New Media

“Connected man has a pressing need for novelty and for contact that has been created for him by giving him the means to satisfy it. If he cuts himself off to protect himself, or switches off his alerts, he fears that he may miss something important. Of course these fears are imaginary, but they are encouraged by pressure at work, by the wretched state of human relations in our society, and also by the desire to exist through the media,”

“*Homo connecticus*, even when away from all his devices is (de)formed by his habitual interaction with the media. He lives his inner time as a broken jumbled mess, which makes him lose any natural unity of coherence of his inner life.”

The Cult of Speed

“We do everything ever more quickly, and we expect that everything should be done faster and faster.”

Everything! Right Now!

Battle Cry of the Radicals in the 60's
makes one a prisoner of desires

“The intensity of joy depends on the intensity of desire, which in turn depends on its distance in space or time from its object.”

The Problems of Speed

instant information

“The speed of false steps in no way shortens the road!”

degraded messaging

“Time is no longer experienced as duration, but as a succession of events too short to have duration.”

Acceleration of Tasks and Multitasking

“When two unconnected activities are performed at the same time, they are not done so well.”

“The more you multitask, the less deliberative you become; the less able to think and reason out a problem.”

time gain is an illusion

no “dead” time

“...man absolutely needs silence, solitude, and calm to maintain his equilibrium and to be fulfilled. Dead time is when man can take care of himself, can reflect freely, meditate, contemplate, and pray. This is the time he can devote to those dear to him and nourish a true relationship with them.”

“The result (of speed, etc) is burn out, the scorching of his body, mind, and soul. He is burnt up in both body and soul, and experience here and now is of hell.”

The Destruction of Interpersonal Relationships

“I think we have created tools which are ripping apart the social fabric.” (ex VP of Facebook)
nihilism in motion

“Global Village:” “So the Global village is not a real village, for the neighbors are not real neighbors, the kinsmen real kinsmen, or the friends real friends.”

Communication Without Content Which Is an End in Itself

Hypercommunication as a Fake Escape from Solitude

increases loneliness

New Means of Communication as Obstacles to Communication

Restriction of Community Life

a universe where everyone becomes his own little world

Disembodiment of Relationships

easier to deceive with words when the body is absent

Impoverishment of Interpersonal Contacts

reduction of language

New Individualism

Widespread Autism

leads to separation/isolation

more of a way of admiring himself by using others

“likes” and “followers”
Real Relationships vs. Virtual Relationships

Problem of Pseudonyms in Discussion Spaces (*handles*)

1. question of competence
 2. subjects are relativised
 3. encourage lack of respect for other contributors
 4. cheating and trickery
 5. trolling
 6. depersonalizes the contributors and makes them unreal
- pride, not modesty

Once something appears it may exist forever.

Evil Encounters

The Internet: A Place of Impunity Where No Law Applies
Promoting Sex and Violence
all manner of predators

The Abolition of Private Life

Reducing the Distance Between Public and Private Life
The Coming of Big Brother
State Surveillance of Individuals
Economic Control of Everyone
Self-exposure and the Loss of Modesty and a Sense of Intimacy

The Denial of the Body and Its Effects on Health

“Placing one’s body out of sight and being blind to the bodies of others are not caused only by the media. It is also due to the desire to escape and hide out of sight of others so as not to face up to their real existence to which the physical presence of their bodies bears witness.”

New Media as a Health Risk

“Imagine a recreational substance whose consumption would increase considerably the incidence of obesity, smoking, alcoholism, sleep disorders, attempted suicides, dangerous sexual habits and eating disorders (anorexia and bulimia). Would you accept this substance in your home? Would you allow your children to use it?”

Reduction of Physical Activity
Debasement of Eating Habits, Bulimia and Obesity
Alcoholism and Addiction to Tobacco
Sleep Problems
Tiredness and Stress

The Dominance of the Virtual over the Real

Pride of Place for the Image
transposition of reality into images which can be manipulated

Virtual Reality and Augmented Reality: Two New Products on the Drug Market

Mental Disorders

Obsessional and Compulsive Behavior
Fears and Anxiety Aroused by Hyperconnectivity
False Solution to Anxious Feelings and the Need for Reassurance
Means of Escaping Boredom
Distorted Vision of the World
Image and Representation of Oneself as More Important Than Reality
Relationship More Important Than an Identity
Ill Effects of Transparency
Externalization of the Person and the Impoverishment of Inner Life
Increase of Emotion and Diminishing of Affection
New Media as Elements of Regression (think of language)
A Field That Favors Narcissism
Burn Out and Depression
Addictive Effects
A Space of Illusory Freedom

Dumbing Down the Mind

“It is becoming more and more obvious that the use of the new media affects the user’s mental processes and dumbs them down.”

Deterioration in School Results
Comprehensive Dumbing Down
Image is more important than the text
Shrinking language
Negative impact on reading
Weakening of Reflection
Information Without Learning of Knowledge
Losing One’s Memory
Destroying the Capacity for Attention and Concentration
Fragmenting and Disorganizing Thought
Modifying the Structure of the Brain and the Way It Works

The Impoverishment of Spiritual Life

“We have emphasized the religious character, in the broad sense, of the new media, but this is a religion without God and a spirituality without Spirit.”

“we abandon a world of contemplation and reaching upwards and enter a world of openness and reaching sideways.”

“they bring forth distraction, pleasure seeking, levity, curiosity, talkativeness, and empty gossip.”

Man, Riveted to Matter and the Body by the Internet and Connected Objects

effortless power at a distance

devices to increase physical performance—part of the cult of the body and youthfulness

Communication: A Substitute for Communion

Provoking and Feeding the Passions

Self-exposure and Overexposure: A New Terrain for the Practice of Self-love, Vanity, and Pride

Destroyers of Hesychia

nepsis

concentrated attentive and vigilant prayer

Prevention and Treatment

invasion over three decades, medium replaces the message (connectedness not content is king), destruction of personal relationships, abolition of private life, mental disorders, dumbing down, and ultimately the impoverishment of spiritual life

isolation, breakdown of family values, lack of humility, i.e. narcissism & conceit

radicalization of the youth (words are violence!), lack of religiousity and moral values, all leading to violence

repeat: New Media as a Health Risk

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All things considered, we can all agree that in the very least there are dangers and perhaps unexpected consequences to unrestricted access/use of new media.

“Total abstinence is without doubt the best.”

The compromise: “We can limit our use of the new media to what is essential for our way of life, especially for our work.”

Question: Is there any hope?

How to Cure Dependency

first must be recognized by subject or those close to them

relations to others are disturbed

ungovernable impulses and frustrations

tiredness and nervous exhaustion

Psychotherapy

extreme cases

treatments for up to a year

“a response to existential problems that are at its root and must be treated urgently

give example

Less Severe Cases

Retreats

- cut off for a time
- support of others

Question: Should this be noted and followed in our retreats? Get-togethers?

Unplugging from Media that Are Not Really Needed

- especially social media

Question: Does anyone see benefits to social media?

In Perspective

- more to life than media
- rediscovering old ways of relationship
- reading books

Question: Any experience of this in your life?

Standing up to Social and Economic Pressure

- seen as fashionable
- though simply cogs in the profit machine
- shield from exploitation
- appear to be busy, engaged, important

Question: How important is your image in the eyes of others?

Setting Filters

- many options these days
- have to be thoughtfully deployed

Question: Have you taken the time, annoying as it is?

Unplugging

- turn off
- Internet off at certain hour
- turn in cell phones

Question: How do you govern your home?

Managing Online Time

- setting limits for self-promotion
- more importantly for children
- limit television

better to agree to rules in advance than to sporadically grab away

Question:

Managing Content

- Favorites list
- recording appropriate programs

Question: Any ideas for implementation?

Discretion

- virtues of intimacy and secret inner life must be rediscovered

Finding True Friendship Once More
media “friendships” are fake
virtues of true friendship measured by quality not quantity
long moments of communing together, in touch at the deepest level
Question: Are you willing to put in the effort?

Care for the Other in Composing the Message
take care in composing

Taking Time
discover benefits of slowness
“It should be devoted to one’s own existence, which the person needs to be and to blossom in his inner life.

Best Prevention” The Education of Children
limit and control use
“The solution is to train children to manage the use of new media strictly that can only be done by closely supporting them right up to adolescence, which will be easier for them to handle if the main methods of self-control have been acquired in childhood.”
first learn to communicate in traditional ways, contact with other children, etc
build up their own true personalities
educated with traditional methods
no media in bedrooms
aim simply to fulfill their needs, not aimless searching
“...the CEOs of businesses in Silicon Valley prevented their children from using these different devices until they were fairly mature, and that even then, they were strictly controlled.”
time for all screens to be switched off

Prevention of Undesirable Content, Abuse of Personal Data, Commercial Exploitation, and Propaganda
plague of mockery, humiliation, and bullying
evil-minded sexual deviants
avoid communicating personal data
secure search engines, DuckDuckGo, Brave
“do not track”

Spiritual Healing and Prevention

Fasting from New Mediator
“The aim of this is not deprivation, but to loose one’s habitual bonds so as to be freer and readier for higher tasks, to turn from dispersion the better to attend to spiritual activities and the ‘one thing needful’.”
the spiritual healing of oneself and one’s neighbor and to open oneself to God
Question: Should this be added to our fasting regulations?

Mastering Impulses, Desires, and Passions
the continual struggle to eliminate the passions bit by bit and to develop the opposing virtues
“For mankind, it is the best way of life.”

Question: Are you always aware of the Unseen Warfare?

Benefits of Humility

pride.
cultivate humility that dissolves the illusions and disappointments of vanity and

First place to love of God and neighbor, not self-love

Question: What are we afraid of?

Virtues of Silence and Solitude

hesychia

reproving of “vain words”

restricting conversations to the essential

rediscover inner life and re-forge himself in outer silence and inner peace

Making Time for Reading

reading is essential, it instructs and nourishes the soul

lectio divina in the West, reading leading to contemplation

freer form but indispensable in the East

Without Fail Make Time for Prayer

“The time for prayer must be preserved absolutely inviolable.”

cut off disturbing connections

nepsis (vigilance and sobriety) and attention

Caring for Neighbors

those close to us

with total attention

Paying Attention

reject all temptations and banal thoughts

imaginings, memories, desires

Dealing with Phone Addiction

Based on the search results, here are some effective strategies and tips to help you overcome phone addiction:

1. **Remove unnecessary apps:** Get rid of apps that don't serve a purpose, such as social media or games, to reduce temptation.
2. **Set boundaries:** Designate phone-free zones (e.g., bedroom, dining table) and times (e.g., during meals, before bed).
3. **Use phone-limiting features:** Enable features like Screen Time on iOS or Digital Wellbeing on Android to track and limit your phone use.
4. **Practice mindfulness:** Be aware of your phone use and acknowledge when you're reaching for your phone out of habit or boredom.
5. **Find alternative activities:** Engage in hobbies, exercise, or reading to fill time and reduce the need for phone use.

6. **Set goals and track progress:** Set specific goals for reducing phone use and track your progress to stay motivated.
7. **Replace phone use with healthier habits:** Replace phone use with activities that promote relaxation, such as meditation, deep breathing, or yoga.
8. **Use phone-free days:** Designate one day a week or a month without phone use to reset your habits and reduce cravings.
9. **Seek support:** Share your struggles with a friend or family member and ask for their support in staying accountable.
10. **Consider therapy:** If phone addiction is negatively impacting your life, consider seeking professional help from a therapist or counselor.

Additional Tips

- Turn off notifications and alerts to reduce distractions.
- Use a physical alarm clock instead of your phone's alarm.
- Charge your phone outside of your bedroom to reduce the temptation to check it at night.
- Use a phone case or app that helps you stay focused on your goals.
- Limit your phone use during meals and conversations to prioritize social connections.
- Practice gratitude by reflecting on the things you're thankful for each day, rather than reaching for your phone.