

Technology's Perception of Humanity

Technology is evolving. In 142 years we have gone from Alexander Graham Bell, to Vint Cerf and Bob Khan, to Tim Berners-Lee and more recently, Mark Zuckerberg. Technology has helped humanity advance in ways that wouldn't have been predicted millennia ago, and arguably, and in some ways, it might have taken over society itself.

This exhibition is about how technology sees and regards humanity, not through society or culture, but as assets.

Contextually, this is important today as the data analytic firm 'Cambridge Analytica' used advertising on Facebook to manipulate voters during the 2016 US elections.

This has led many to question Facebook, and also delete their accounts.

The five main texts that I am looking at are:

'Simulacra and Simulation' by Jean Baudrillard

'Are You Living in A Computer Simulation' by Nick Bostrom.

"A map is not the territory" by Alfred Borzybski

'Social Construction of Reality' by Peter Berger

'The Question Concerning Technology' by Martin Heidegger.

Simulacra and Simulation is a book by French cultural theorist Jean Baudrillard. In it, he examines the relationship between reality, symbols and society. I have chosen to refer to this text as it was part of the basis for the Matrix film trilogy, an influence for this exhibition. While it may seem different to my original idea, I am using this to show how people can be manipulated or coerced into doing certain actions by what they see online.

'Are You Living in A Computer Simulation' is a paper by English professor Nick Bostrom, commonly referred to as 'The Simulation Argument'. It conveys the idea that we as humanity are being "watched upon" through some sort of computer simulation. I have chosen to refer to this paper as it shows a possibility of what could happen in the future of technology and humanity.

"A map is not the territory" is a quote from 'Science and Sanity' by Polish-American philosopher Alfred Korzybski. It refers to the concept of things not appearing as they seem which shows a similar principle to the Magritte painting 'This Is Not A Pipe'. I am referring to this in my piece as it shows that there can be a false perspective of reality, of which technology could be taking control of. Contextually, this could relate to the 'fake news' phenomena.

'Social Construction of Reality' is a book by sociologists Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann about the sociology of knowledge. It refers to the idea that reality could become too addictive, e.g. social media. The reason as to why I am referring to this in my piece is because it infers that technology could be taking control of us.

'The Question Concerning Technology' is a text by German philosopher Martin Heidegger about the essence of technology. It refers to the idea that we as humanity do not fully understand what technology is yet, and that there is a lot more to explore. The reason as to why I am referring to this in my piece is because

technology is still relatively new in universal history and we still are not aware of what technology is and what it can do to the world.

The first painting I am showing in my exhibition is 'Sent from my iBrain' from 2016, by English illustrator Steve Cutts. It is meant to address the idea that computers and modern technology are learning and knowing more than society now knows. The text that relates to this piece is 'Social Construction of Reality' because it explains how knowledge is social: "I encounter knowledge in everyday life as socially distributed..." (Berger & Luckmann, 1966) The social aspect of this quotation can be related to modern social media websites as what we might know about a topic can come from something we read or watch on Facebook/YouTube. Seeing that this was made two years ago, it uses technology that is recognisable today, in smartphones.



The next exhibit is an interactive area inspired by 'The Matrix' film trilogy. What I mean by interactive is that visitors will be able to see outside but with a digital filter, via a two-way mirror, like the picture on the right. The text that relates to this piece is "Are You Living in A Computer Simulation?" by Nick Bostrom because it implies that we might be living in a simulated universe:" ... unless we are



(Wachowski & Wachowski, 1999)

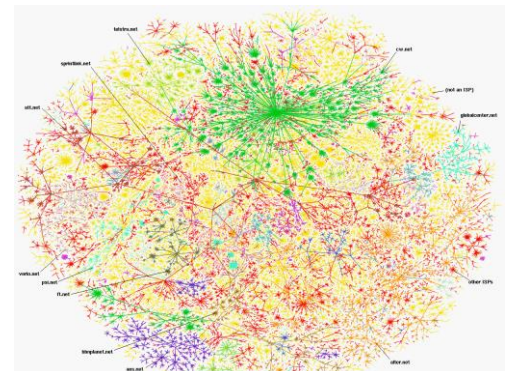
currently living in a simulation." If this theory were to be believed, the film itself would be an accurate depiction of what we assume is reality. (Bostrom, 2003)

The next exhibit is a map of all the Facebook 'friend' links worldwide. Even though this is a stock image rather than a piece of artwork, it is interesting as it shows how connected we as humanity are to the internet, and therefore technology. The text that relates to this piece is 'Simulacra and Simulation' by Jean Baudrillard because it explains that there is a literal social network: "... upon which function all power and the entire

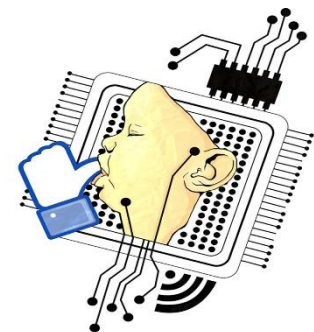


social stratum.” (Baudrillard, 1981). Taken from this perspective, humanity looks inferior. I am currently unable to find out when this image was made, but I can only assume it was within the past 10 years.

The next image I am going to show is a map of the internet. Similarly, to the Facebook image, I am unable to pinpoint when this image was made. It shows how complex and misunderstood the internet is, even when we ‘think’ we fully understand it. The text that relates to this image is ‘Science and Sanity’ by Alfred Borzybski: “A map is not the territory it represents...” (Borzybski, 1995). This is relatable to this image as it shows that the ‘map’ we think we know is completely different to the overall ‘territory’, shown on the right.



The final painting in my exhibition is “The Future of Communication” by Gabriela Ledezma. It shows what could become of humanity, with a baby’s face having been wired into a circuit board, while sucking on a Facebook like button. It is shown as a future possibility of humanity being consumed by technology rather than the other way around. The text that refers to this painting is ‘The Question Concerning Technology’ by Martin Heidegger; The essence of modern technology shows itself in what we call Enframing.” (Heidegger, 1954) In the context of this text, Enframing means framework. In relation to my context, it means that technology is starting to become embedded in our society and culture, and possibly humanity itself.



Bibliography

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