

THE ULTIMATE REVOLUTION?

Historians have identified 3 major revolutions in the timeline of our humankind. First, in the Agricultural Revolution, roughly 12,000 years ago, we traded our spears and nomadic lifestyle for a more domestic one. We put down roots, literally and figuratively, and decided to stick around a while. It worked out well for a long time, but doing and making things by hand is hard work so why not invent machines to help us along. The whistle blew and during the Industrial Revolution, roughly 200 years ago, many put down their hoes and plows and moved to the big city to work in factories. Productivity increased and cities grew big and dense, and the way we worked and lived, learned and played, and moved around had changed forever. And of course, we made more things, lots of things.

And here we are now, the 21st century, smack down in the middle of the third revolution, the Digital Revolution and all its magical wonders, otherwise known as the Information Age, ironically filled with much misinformation.

When the Golden Goose of Progress honks, it's heard far and wide, and a large lot of humankind heed the call and pay homage to its promise of bigger, better, faster, smarter, prettier, cheaper, easier, with less work and more play, less fat and more filling. Though I'm not so sure about this. With every revolution and all its gains, come substantial losses. It seems to me we're as busy as ever, rarely play enough, and there's way more fat than filling.

As the popular adage goes, *if you don't use it, lose it*. When we left our lifestyle of hunter-gatherers, did our senses grow less keen? No longer did we need to see so well in the dark, or hear the smallest movement, or smell the faintest scent of an animal. We moved around, hunted and fished varied game, gathered a variety of fruits, seeds, mushrooms and roots. On the farm, our diets were less varied and simple. On the farm, life was hard but not the kind of hardship endured by a nomadic lifestyle where basic survival was difficult in and of itself. Did our domesticated ancestors lose their ability to survive like their nomadic ancestors? Along with their keen senses, did they lose their ability to adapt to their surroundings and circumstances? Ever notice how popular survival TV programs have become in recent years. Do we long to feel that real struggle to survive? Is it still programmed inside our ancestral DNA? If so, does it serve any purpose today?

Onward to the city! And what was lost once we severed our intimate connection to the earth, to the fruits of our hard labor and the land- passed on to us by our parents, land we learned to nurture, that in turn nurtured us. Can we find such a symbiotic relationship in the hustle and bustle of big city life? For all the things we gained, how much of our humanity was sacrificed in this transition?

Welcome to the digital age! No need to think, we got you covered! For all our information, all our access to the world and all its knowledge, how much have we really learned? Will *this* New Age save us from ourselves? Without doubt, computers and technology have advanced our lives in so many ways, but can a digital life sustain us?

"It has become appallingly obvious that our technology has exceeded our humanity."

— Albert Einstein

Our digital age is characterized by a series of paradoxes. We have more knowledge than ever at our fingertips, yet we're more ignorant. We have vast technologies available to build and create, yet our children have forgotten how to use their imaginations, inundated by high-speed sights and sounds designed to entertain, and to trap them in an endless cycle of desire and need. And when imagination dies, dreams have nothing to hold onto, nothing to reach for. What's left floats on the surface without direction, unpowered by imagination, and indifferent to what's happening all around.

"Imagination is more important than knowledge. For knowledge is limited, whereas imagination embraces the entire world, stimulating progress, giving birth to evolution."

— Albert Einstein

Of course, there is the promise of social media to keep us connected, to help us in building and maintaining our relationships...or rather, does it make us feel even more isolated and disconnected from others? How do we define our relationships today? How many clicks does it take to be a "friend"? How many comments to demonstrate true affection? How many emoticons reflect a sincere human reaction? How many human reactions are void of real interaction?

Each revolution is marked by significant change. In the industrial revolution, we invented machines to work for us, and now in the digital age, we've invented computers to think for us. Is it any wonder that movies have been made, and books written of a future controlled by robots/machines/computers? However, this premise assumes a difference between human and machine. Perhaps once we install chips in ourselves, the line will not be so clear.

"I believe in standardizing automobiles. I do not believe in standardizing human beings."

— Albert Einstein

In such a digital-scape, will the digital-born rise to the call of resolving the world's major problems? Hunger, disease and drought, species and resources dying out, and let's not forget nuclear weapons still ticking, all of these problems, and possibly more, are quite alive and still kicking. Will we even be prepared enough to confront such enormous challenges? Will we even care? And if so, can our newfound technologies help? Will this age leave us with more gained than lost? Will it help save us or doom us? Are we still strong enough, smart enough, adaptable enough to work together with or without our technologies to overcome the problems before us? Or is this our ultimate revolution? Bound to a course of no return, so round and round we go like mindless zombies wandering to and fro, and where it stops nobody really knows.

This much I know. In this new transformation, this digital age, we must fight, individually and collectively, to hold on to what is human. Just as curiosity killed the cat, so

too, it keeps us human. Our curiosity, fueled by imagination, keeps us looking up to stars even from the gutter, or from a cold, flat screen. Our passions and hopes, our inspirations and dreams, our very hearts and minds must be nurtured and protected against ignorance and indifference, against overstimulation and misinformation, against isolation and empty communication, against all these things that that leave us empty and dry. We still have our humanity, so we still have a choice before it's too late.

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