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Critical Response: Four Futures

The “Four Futures” Section of *Enchanted Objects* recalled to me an old text I was exposed to early into my exploration of Computation Arts during its first chapter. The introductory stream of thought about the advancement of technology, specifically of Screens replacing old models, immediately recalled to me the concept of *The Medium is the Message*, by Marshall McLuhan. The author contemplates how predictable the implementation of screens has become in our daily lives, as well as how cynical the attempts at monetizing all of our time have become. In this sense the Screens have come to symbolize something in our culture: Just as they are products for us, we have become products through them as our information becomes a commodity for large corporations in order to sell to us. The medium of screens have begun to stagnate, as from now the only possible means of improving it is by bringing about greater fidelity images, that more accurately recall the reality that is being turned to commodity. The message becoming one of a similar complacency within us as we simply accept these increasingly obsolete screens, as they are replaced faster and faster.

Throughout my reading of the section I came to recall many past events, from early on in my studies, an Article I can no longer find, but whose points stuck close to mind. When discussing prosthetics the author makes the connection between additional enhancements for people as the creation of cyborgs. Many people now have implants that technically qualify them as such, but even those without them could be considered in a similar manner. Cellphones, the focus of the old article I’d long since lost track of, serve as an extension of a person’s mind and cognition. People are able to learn more than they ever could have before, and they are able to access it faster. Though the author in “Four Futures” does explain the positive and almost super power like aspects of these prosthetics, there exist several downsides as well, and not only the exaggerated villain versions the author presents in the text. The objects presented to be looked down upon are used by villains like Lex Luthor and Clayface for violence, and though unappealing and cliched to the author, they are sadly no less realistic than what is likely to happen, and sometimes not even as bad. “Because it doesn’t tap into basic positive human desires such as omniscience and creation,” (24) is the author’s justification for their distaste towards the violent depictions of prosthetics in media, but when one of the apparent leading developers of top quality Prosthesis are DARPA (Popular Science) it is hard to believe this to be true.

Humanity is caught up in a cycle of violence and overwhelming desire to consume and expand their sphere of power and knowledge. Rather than wanting to be omniscient people more often desire to become omnipotent, and just as much as we hope to create we are driven to destroy, if not more. We are living contradictions. Cellphones and other machinery can make people complacent and feed into this contradictory nature in people. The pressure to learn and actually know things becomes less, when any info one may need lies at our fingertips, at any time we desire. Our desire to create fills us at the same time with an immense fear of what we create. When looking at the development of robots and AI, and the possibility of creating life, people become paranoid. The potential advancement of technology becomes overwritten by the fear that similarly to how in a figurative manner people have chosen to kill God who we once saw as our creator, that what we create may end up destroying us.

Our explorations of technology can lead to many outcomes, and it is really interesting to see how things develop. But it isn't good to be selective on what to be optimistic and negative about. Though it is normal to do so, one must not look at another's fears and perspectives as foolish without trying to understand them, and even that which may seem obsolete in technology could serve as a jumping off point for even further advancements.

This particular section of *Enchanted Objects* was a great exploration into what made up the beginnings of my explorations into Computation arts and design. It serves almost as a book end to my journey through this program as it brings back into recollection the many experiences and past studies explored over the course of time, not only for me but for humanity as a whole, in the past short while. Technology has advanced more in the past few decades than it had for several centuries beforehand, and it is interesting to see how that reflects on how we come to perceive things such as screens, through which we first began to dream in colours but from which we no longer get as much as we take away. Prosthetics, through which we have been able to regain lost senses but possibly also lose others. Robots, through which our futures may lie, whether to prosper or or fall, in fear or complacency, and through the enchantment of our everyday objects. Making the ordinary into something extraordinary, before ultimately turning that Extraordinary new thing back into the commonplace, into the ordinary.

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