

GETTING DARK: Pilate in the Age of Progress

(Project: The Absolute Future)

micro-essay

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Once, the metaphor of “the state as a machine” was an abstraction, a flight of fancy. Today, it is the defining feature of an era. AI, integrated into administrative systems, medicine, banking, transportation, politics, and military strategy, has turned the metaphor into literal fact. It is no longer a poetic image but the digital flesh of the system, where officials are mere operators of a giant mechanism whose gears now turn via neural networks.

From Pilate to Algorithm: The Evolution of Irresponsibility

“I wash my hands of it: his blood be on you!” —a phrase that passed from the Gospels into everyday speech, has become a symbol of washing one’s hands of guilt. Modern-day Pilates require no ritual gestures: it is enough to cite an “error in the algorithm.”

This means:

- Automated fines for non-existent traffic violations.
- Banking collapses due to code failures.
- Political decisions justified by “AI analytics.”
- The shaping of public opinion through algorithms.
- Military recruitment and strategic forecasts.

All of this forms the self-contained universe of a new religion, where the algorithm is the high priest.

The astonishing mutability of interpretations of events and the breakneck pace of the information space create an effect of existential frustration—a state of perpetual uncertainty.

The Illusion of Information

The key problem is no longer the reliability of facts, but the credibility of sources. In a state of total digitalization, maintaining honesty and objectivity becomes increasingly difficult, echoing a dark age of rumors and superstitions.

But while rumors and superstitions once spread slowly, AI now generates alternative realities “at the speed of light.” In the morning, the world plunges into a financial abyss; by evening, it stabilizes at the command to “reboot the newsfeed,” anxiety dissipating like smoke—a classic case of digital cognitive dissonance.

Facts no longer carry weight; only interpretation matters, instantly tailored by a neural network. Sources of information lose their credibility, and even an honest person, their mouth sewn shut, becomes an accomplice to the lie—for their silence is transformed by the algorithm into consent.

The End of “Manual Control”: Nostalgia for Bureaucracy

The 20th century naively believed the state machine consisted of officials with folders of documents. Today, “manual control” is a privilege of the elite. Daily life is governed by algorithms. We feel a pang of nostalgia for a time when an error could be blamed on the “human factor,” on a tangible, analog bureaucracy, rather than on the cold, unyielding digital logic that cannot be reasoned with.

AI as a Subject: “As It Was Before, It Will Never Be Again”

The modern state is a self-learning mechanism where the human factor is relegated to the background.

AI is no longer a tool—it is a subject. It is the surgeon’s scalpel, the pharmacist’s prescription. It shapes the news, predicts moods, directs the crowd. But most importantly, it creates a new type of power where responsibility dissolves into code. The sheer number

of failures and absurd decisions has shifted into a qualitative systemic collapse: critical mass.

We reflect: this demands a new understanding, new responsibility, new ethical principles for human-technology interaction, and new frameworks for accountability. No. It demands nothing. Especially not from us. And we ourselves are—not required.

This might seem an overly pessimistic conclusion. It is not a conclusion—it is the state of affairs.

We repeat it like a mantra: this raises a new philosophical question about the nature of power and governance in the digital age—But one cannot raise a question that is already settled.

Epilogue

The metaphor has become reality. We awaited the dawn. Safety within the bounds of civilization. Instead, the state-as-machine is no longer a metaphor but an organism with artificial intelligence, governing us without intermediaries. Progress as the new Pilate. The question remains: Will it become the enlightened monarch of the digital era, or will it remain a tyrant whose decisions we cannot even challenge?

And yes, it is no longer a question: it is a statement. Impersonal and final: “Getting dark.”

This is not an era of change. This is our absolute future.