

# INCUBATION

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Thoughts, ideas, and information are as self-replicative as any biological organism. They originate from some source, are communicated from person to person, and mutate as they spread. Some form of “natural” selection exists to weed out the “bad” ideas, and the resulting information is much more developed than the seed from which it grew.

The ways in which we spread information have evolved through time. In the early days, you were limited to what your family knew and what your neighbors knew – those people you could geographically have a face-to-face conversation with. This became messengers on horseback ferrying news from town to town in the form of a herald, or letters. Then came pamphlets and newspapers. Next was radio, television, and the internet. With each evolutionary step of information transmission, your bubble of potential knowledge and expanded, and the ideas and thoughts you were exposed to came from a wider variety of sources. I think it’s safe to say that the wider your bubble, the greater amount of critical thinking you are able to do and the more educated you become about the world. This is particularly important in regards to ideas you didn’t agree with. Talking with people who hold the same views as you is great, but I would argue you learn the most from those with whom you disagree. The wider the bubble, the more comprehensive the world view.

Except we have put a halt to the self-replication of ideas. Our bubbles have expanded, expanded, expanded and then – stopped. We rarely get our news from a “big” source now; most of my generation doesn’t read newspapers or listen to radio or watch TV. The majority of our news comes from links and articles we see on our feeds – feeds that we have self-selected. In the age of social media, we have the effect of an echo chamber: where intelligent algorithms and an ability to select our online circle naturally result in surrounding ourselves only with those that hold the same views. A Facebook post make you angry? Block ‘em. I can only watch Fox News? Sure, sign me up. What does this do to the quality of ideas? If information can only spread so far, and we are all in our own little echo chambers, what does this do to our ability to gain understanding about the world?

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A huge thanks to the UW Comotion Makerspace (especially Ian!) for enabling this project.