# Facebook, Henry Ford, et al, and the need to reverse technological dehumanization

Contributed by Jan Lundberg
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DRAFT

"Screenism" -- it's everywhere except among the very young, the very old, and the nature-dwelling primitive. It began with television over one half century ago, for those who had time for hours of passive entertainment, or for the electronically babysat. Except, now that screens of hand-held mobile telephones, iPads, laptop and desktop computers are "essential" and billions of the most active people on the planet depend on them, digital technology in general -- with far more kinds of imagery than TV, plus maximized communicating and information manipulation -- has taken over entire lifestyles.

Other kinds of technology were intruding on modern life when television became ubiquitous: cars, nuclear energy and nuclear weapons, and perhaps the most lasting: plastics. Consumerism's role as the reason for modern economics (i.e., profiting) was cemented and only abates minimally through recessions, and not noticeably through alternative philosophical lifestyles. Yet, the critique of consumerism, television and the "Plastic Society" commenced and flowered in the 1960s not long after imposing technologies pacifying and minimizing human action and interaction took hold. Science as a mega-corporate tool, as more and more of us know, is proving to be an incalculable disservice to humanity and nature. So is the innovative advent of most modern technological systems, we see as the evidence mounts. Mistakes, well-meaning or not, are always part of being human, but writ large and relentlessly perpetuated they cannot be ignored or excused indefinitely.

I predict that Facebooks' founders, Henry Ford, Dupont's plastics inventors, and others will not go down in post-consumer history as heroes or geniuses but rather as overall misfortunes to everyone and everything.

Facebook and the like as an exclusion of direct human communication is not a positive development for humanity or for the natural world that we little realize we absolutely depend on. It does little good to state this on "Fakebook." Similarly, attempting to spread truth and expose society's lies and scams via total reliance on the Internet is a distracting substitute for better organizing. Many observers have pointed out the paradox of massive dependence on electricity-demanding gadgets and using jet fuel, to fight both the effect of those innovations and the system that places them above human value.

What to do about our historic wasteful, toxic, and radioactive dilemma seems off-limits or unfathomable even to people who acknowledge the general dangers. But if we can begin to minimize dehumanization by technology by maximizing direct human communication, by strengthening family, community, and connection to pristine nature, we are on a path to reverse lethal trends such as climate destruction. In so doing we may also more successfully end and avert war as well as reckless "development," i.e., big-business assault on people and the environment for private profit and power.

Specifics for a safe path include radical conservation, permaculture, bicycle culture, sail transport, removing roads and other asphalt, resurrecting traditional skills, engaging in resistance to the corporate state's oppression, and fostering freedom of expression and creativity. These are well-documented and nurtured, for a small minority so far. They are suppressed but irrepressible factors for sustainability, and they enjoy some popularity, exploration, and furtherance by many talented, devoted practitioners.

During this time of life-and-death struggle for a sustainable future, it is vital to question the basis of Western Civilization and "progress" based on growth and mass control. Without frank discussion of overpopulation, the realities of energy and petroleum, the demise of the consumer economy, questioning inequitable social relations, and grappling immediately with rapid climate change, it is possible that many activist efforts to ameliorate our situation and plight will remain too isolated. Unity based on principles of seeing wealth not as money or property, and embracing what nature offers without over-manipulation, may make the difference for a mass movement to successfully strive for an evolved world consciousness.

To move forward, we will have to let go of certain conveniences that recently latched onto people's lives. As we discover that agribusiness via petrochemical and mechanical intervention for short-term advantage is poisoning and weakening us, and as we learn that antibacterial soap, for example, is a negative for daily use, and as we learn that the medical industry and insurance are not the main key to individual healing and public health, we find we have really not deprived ourselves, nor romanticized the more natural or primitive past. Rather, we instead liberate ourselves and take more control over our lives.

The idea of a break with entrenched conventions and today's system can be most daunting, as collapse invokes for

many a fear of complete chaos, repression, strife and loss.  But as society has almost consistently evaded reasonable planning and simple changes for general welfare and stability of the biosphere, "time of useful consciousness" is dwindling fast.