

INSULTING MACHINES

It is a graceful degradation, bristling with paths not taken
Supercharged by Taylor's one best way
with all the zeal of the monotheist
Where Schumpeter shoves, Kondratiev waves and Gladwell points
All in hot pursuit of singularity.
Behold the strange phyla as they stalk their makers
They too can walk, feed, talk and – some say – think.

We create devices and then they create us.
Narcissus-like, we gaze into a pool of technology and see ourselves.
We acquiesce in our own demise, setting out as participants
and metamorphosing into victims.
The diagnosis is serious: a rapidly spreading species' loss of nerve
Tacit knowledge is demeaned whilst propositional knowledge is revered.
Who needs imagination when there are facts?

A human enhancing symbiosis ignored
whilst a dangerous convergence proceeds apace – as human beings
confer life on machines and in so doing diminish themselves.

Your calculus may be greater than his calculus
but will it pass the Sullenberger Hudson River test?
Meantime, the virtual is confused with the real
– as parents lavish attention on the virtual child
whilst their real child dies of neglect and starvation.

Potential and reality are torn apart as change is confused with progress
With slender knowledge of deep subjects
– you proceed with present tense technology,
obliterating the past and with the future already mortgaged.
The court of history may find you intoxicated with species arrogance
recklessly proceeding without a Hippocratic Oath.

Thus the deskiller is deskilled, as a tsunami of technology
rocks our foundations.

The multinational apologist solemnly declares: 'We should have the courage
to accept our true place in the evolutionary hierarchy
– namely animals, humans and post singularity systems'.

Now the sky darkens with pigeons coming home to roost
and the mine canaries topple from their perches unnoticed.

That distant sound grows louder.

Is it the life affirming energy of Riverdance
or the clacking hooves of the Four Horsemen?

That music, is it 'Ode to Joy' or is it 'Twilight of the Gods?'

As the embrace tightens into genteel strangulation – will the seducer
in final deception whisper 'Shall I compare thee to a Summer's day?'

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This poem was first published in AI & SOCIETY Vol.28 No.4 Dec 2013.