

Numbed by Numbers on the Way to the “Digital Palace.” “A Threat to our Humanity”

The Internet and digital media are the greatest propaganda tools ever invented

By [Edward Curtin](#)

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“But yet mathematical certainty is after all, something insufferable. Twice two makes four seems to me simply a piece of insolence. Twice two makes four is a pert coxcomb who stands with arms akimbo barring your path and spitting. I admit that twice two makes four is an excellent thing, but if we are to give everything its due, twice two makes five is sometimes a very charming thing too.” - Fyodor Dostoevsky, Notes from the Underground

Everybody knows that $2 + 2 = 4$ since $4 = 2 + 2$. They know that excellent thing with certainty but generally fail to appreciate the charming nature of $2 + 2 = 5$. Tautologies are usually preferred to choices that seem to contradict the “laws of nature.” Mind-forged manacles are popular because freedom from the laws of nature, while desired, is feared. It suggests that liberty is a fundamental existential truth.

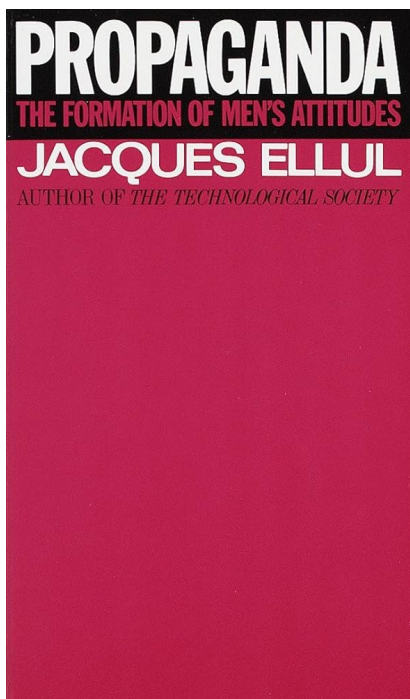
Don’t get me wrong, I can count. I am drinking my second cup of coffee. Number one has disappeared down my throat, but the second coffee tastes fine. It is real and still exists. The first is just an abstraction now - number 1 - a simple vertical line on the page.

We are pissing our lives away on abstractions, forgetting that notation is a system of symbols that direct us to what they intend. The key is to grasp what is intended. The cognitive construction of the number system is a useful tool, but when it is pushed as the essential tool to grasp the meaning of life it has become a tool of control. That is the case today.

The Internet and digital media are the greatest propaganda tools ever invented. They have come to us on the wings of numbers. They are insidious in the extreme, as the etymology of “insidious” tells us - Latin, *insidere*, to sit on, occupy - for over the last few decades they have acted as an invading army occupying our minds with numbers in a cunning attempt to mathematize our lives for techno-scientific, financialized neo-liberal

capitalist purposes. To prepare us for the Great Reset when people and machines will be indistinguishable, Artificial Intelligence (AI), 5-G ultra microwaves, and Agenda 2030 will be fully established, and when human life has become part of The Internet of Things.

That, at least, is what the builders of the new Crystal Palace intend. At the moment, their Digital Palace seems like a stone wall that is here to stay, but as Fyodor has said, people are strange creatures and will sometimes refuse to be reconciled to the impossibility of “stone walls if it disgusts you to be reconciled to it.” I am disgusted.



The construction of the Digital Palace is the long goal that has been underway for decades. To erase lived time and space, flesh and blood humans, and by transfixing people with numbers, to create an abstract and ephemeral reality through a constantly evoked sense of emergency. Living the machine/Internet life would never be acceptable if people had not been subjected to an onslaught of numbers/statistics/data that has accustomed them to think like computers. The great Jacques Ellul made it clear in his classic work, *Propaganda*, that propaganda is much more than the waving of a magic wand and lying, although it is that. It is a long process. He writes:

It is based on slow, constant impregnation. It creates convictions and compliance through imperceptible influences that are effective only by continuous repetition. It must create a complete environment for the individual, one from which he never emerges. And to prevent him from finding external points of reference, it protects him by censoring everything that might come in from the outside. The slow building up of reflexes and myths, of psychological environment and prejudices, is not a stimulus that disappears quickly. . . [my emphasis]

The mathematization of our thinking has been the essential first step in addicting people to the internet complex where mind-control is so effective. I say first step, yet it has been concomitantly accompanied by daily litanies of lies about world events through what Ray McGovern aptly terms the Military-Industrial-Congressional-Media-Academia-Think-Tank complex (MICIMATT). In his usually masterful way, the great journalist [John Pilger](#) has recently pointed out so many of those grotesque lies about U.S. wars of aggression around

the world. Their numbers are legion, but not the kind of numbers you will find in the mainstream media. We are drowning in lies and numbers produced by a nihilistic elite in love with power, money, mayhem, and murder.

Twenty or so years ago a massive push was organized to give prime emphasis throughout the educational system to what is termed STEM subjects - science, technology, engineering, and mathematics. This has been implemented at the expense of subjects that have traditionally been associated with the liberal arts - philosophy, history, literature, art, music, etc., subjects that introduce students to thinking in the widest and deepest ways. It is no accident that instrumental logic has replaced deep thought for so many people and the poets have been replaced by intellectual pimps. The emphasis on STEM subjects has paralleled the rise of the Internet with its drumbeat of numbers, statistics, and data. Let me offer just a few examples, which may seem innocuous unless seen in their larger context.

- The switch from analog to digital clocks and watches and their omnipresence.
- Referring to the week as 24/7 and the writing of dates as numbers such as 08/30/2023.
- The use-by-date numbers on all products, soon to be applied to commoditized people.
- The use of the term 9/11 to refer to the events of September 11, 2001.
- The listing by numbers of the best colleges, mascara, underwear, corkscrews, etc.
- The hilarious dating of the earth's age to the current 4.4 billion as if that meant anything to anyone.
- The computer generated weather forecasts with their 10 and 30 day forecasts with precise numerical percentages for rain, snow, etc.
- The analytics that dominate the world of sports, the posting of numbers for everything from the speed a ball leaves a baseball bat, a tennis ball a racket, and in golf the speed, height, curve, apex, carry, and launch angle when a ball is driven - all these numbers changing as a computer measures the ball in flight.
- The "helpful" messages on restaurant receipts where the tips are recorded in descending order and exactitude from 18% to 20% to 25%.
- Manipulated statistics for everything under the sun, such as Covid cases and deaths, Ukrainian military casualties, unemployment numbers, etc.
- 6 feet social distancing and 15 days to flatten the curve - real science

It is easy for one to add to this small list of the use of numbers. They are everywhere and are intended to be - in people's heads, as the saying goes. They are intended to induce mass production of thought and behavior that is numb and that tranquilizes real thought and oppositional action. The more this is so, the more the schooling institutions will loudly announce how well they are teaching "critical thinking" skills. All our institutions have become complicit in 24/7 capitalism and the mind-control of deep-state forces.

In his brilliant new book, [Scorched Earth: Beyond the Digital Age to a Post-Capitalist World](#), Jonathan Crary, sums it up nicely:

"One of the foremost achievements of the so-called knowledge economy is the mass production of ignorance, stupidity, and hatefulness. . . . programmed unintelligibility and duplicity."

The reality of everyday life used to revolve around our bodies in place and time. Now that time and place have been jumbled, it revolves for so many around the cell phones in which people live a weird disembodied existence. Sensory life is being annihilated. This is the era of virtual people, shadows of shadows, abstractions upon screens. Our connections to nature, to the seasons, to the sacred ways of our ancestors are being discarded for the machine life in the Digital Palace.

Dostoevsky's underground man wasn't playing a silly game when he suggested that $2 + 2 = 5$. He was saying that free will is more important than reason which just satisfies the rational side of our nature.

Without it we are sub-human, machines in a vast prison of our own making.

His words are more important today than when he wrote them in 1864, the time of The Crystal Palace with its promotion of the Industrial Revolution's technological marvels. Today's Digital Palace marks a far greater threat to our humanity, and so his words are worth attending to:

. . . man everywhere and at all times, whoever he may be, has preferred to act as he chose and not in the least as his reason and advantage dictated. And one may choose what is contrary to one's interests, and sometimes one *positively ought* (that is my idea). One's own free unfettered choice, one's own caprice, however wild it may be, one's own fancy worked up at times to frenzy - that is that 'most advantageous advantage' which we have overlooked, which comes under no classification and against which all systems and theories are continually being shattered to atoms. And how do these wiseacres know that man wants a normal, virtuous choice? What man wants is simply *independent* choice, whatever that independence may cost and wherever it may lead. And choice, of course, the devil only knows what choice.

And if you are apt to raise a finger in warning about such wild advice about existential freedom, let Dostoevsky ask you this rhetorical question about the reasonable and logical ones:

"Have you noticed that it is the most civilized gentlemen who have been the subtlest slaughterers, to whom the Attilas and Stenka Razins could not hold a candle, and if they are not so conspicuous as the Attilas and Stenka Razins it is because they are so often met with, are so ordinary and have become so familiar to us."

As familiar as numbers.

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