

## The Dehumanization of Society

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We live in a remarkable age. Or, at least I have. I have witnessed amazing things. As a child, our telephones were rotary. Some were party lines. My grandparents had an actual ice box, not a refrigerator, and to make a call, you had to ring up the operator and tell her who to connect you to. You see, I was born in 1950. By the time I was five, my parents had purchased their first television. By the time I was six, there were four channels, but Dad still had to tune the antenna to get good reception. Technology was on a roll. I remember the day that Mom bought her first electric can opener. Halfway through the 6th grade, I became aware of something called a computer. My brother taught me binary counting and explained how a computer was complicated in a very simple way. Inside were thousands of what can be visualized as little light switches. They were on or off, but the sequence in which they turned on and off allowed the computer to do simple math. Someone assigned numeric codes to letters and suddenly the computer could type. It became a word processor. But I'm ahead of myself.

I was in college before hand calculators came were available to the public. The space program had rudimentary calculators for guidance, but the pilot still played a major role. After college, in the Navy, I learned just how far advances the military computers were over what civilians got.

Popular Mechanics was always printing articles about how computers would be placed into robots and eventually, these machines would do tasks that people found boring or demeaning. And they were right.

Advances continued and computers were put into cars, eliminating the need for a gas station attendant to check your oil and fluids while pumping the gas. Money, or buying power, could be found on plastic cards, but a person still had to press the card in a stamping machine to process the purchase. The magnetic strip changed all that, and a purchase can be made with a swipe through the reader. Scanners replaced the pat down at security checkpoints. Answering machines replaced receptionists and eventually, the telephone answering tree replaced many department secretaries.

The internet changed it all again. Mail could be sent electronically. Purchases could be made without ever leaving the couch. Banking was all on line. If you don't know how to do something, you don't need to ask Grandpa. You google up a YouTube video.

Don't like your situation in life? Get a virtual reality setup and invent your own planet, friends, property, and pleasures. Too hot or cold to play outside? There's no need for Monopoly, Chutes and ladders, or checkers. Log into a multiplayer game and kill people you never met. Robots are delivering packages and wandering around in department stores to answer your questions, leaving sales staff to do other things. You can even get basic health care with a telehealth visit. Sometimes, you might not be sure if you're conversing with an MD or an AI. Most recently, the trend is that checkout people at groceries and box stores are now being replaced by machines. Money is being replaced by a digital logbook.

In 1999, a movie titled "The Matrix" was released. We are on the verge of entering the matrix as I write this.

"SO WHAT!" the techno-geeks respond. All of these things make life easier. And I must concede that they are correct. The unintended consequence, however, is that society is slowly becoming dehumanized. But don't just take my word for it. Go to your social media page and look at your list of friends. How many of them have you actually met in person? Of those, how many times have you actually interacted with them in the past year? Even death has been dehumanized. At my age, I can point to several dead friends who still have a presence on social media. And social media is transforming into the Meta Verse.

# TECHNOLOGY

The advances in science and technology have  
allowed mankind to fly,  
go to the moon,  
delve into the deepest parts of the ocean,  
and communicate instantly across the globe  
with a device held in one's hand.

Technology has also led to  
on-line banking, telephone answering trees,  
self-checkout, on-line shopping, learning by  
watching a how-to video on social media,  
zoom meetings, and working from home,  
robotic manufacturing,  
delivery of products by drones;

The outcome has been the  
*Dehumanization*  
of society.

~ Tom Cuba, 2022