

MASSIMO MORUZZI

# **The Internet Ideology**

From A as in Advertising to Z  
as in Zipcar

From the same author:

*What Happened To Advertising? What Would Gossage Do?*

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This book is dedicated to the memory of  
Wanda Deuso.

I miss you.



If thought corrupts language, language can  
also corrupt thought.

– George Orwell, *Politics and the English Language*





# INTRO

Regardless of the question, the Internet is the answer. Or so we are told.

It seemed perfectly normal to Jeff Jarvis, a famous American journalist, to ask: "What Would Google Do?" if the company based in Mountain View were put in charge of the public sector. It apparently didn't occur to him that the rules and goals the public sector lives by are, or at least should be, different from those of a private company.

According to many, the Internet, this jumble of servers and communication protocols, is the greatest invention ever. But is it really so? And wasn't the same thing said of inventions such as the telegraph, the radio, movie pictures, television or nuclear energy?

Today the Internet is winning. To the point that it seems *natural* that it should win. But is it so? Does the Internet have to win? Is the Internet's impact positive for society?

Perhaps it's time to clear our minds and talk about the Ideology of the Internet. Because Orwell had it right: When language is not clear, it corrupts our thoughts.

# ADVERTISING

The vast majority of the services we use on the web are backed by advertising.

Which is a bit like saying that you are the product being sold to advertisers.

Is it really advertising? Advertising is a public promise made to a large group of people. Which is not what happens on the Internet, where hyper-targeting means that we have no idea if the same message and promise is being made to other people or not. [1]

How does this "advertising" work? A long time ago, pundits talked about "interactive advertising". For reasons nobody ever cared to explain, the same consumers who went to the bathroom during commercials were supposed to want to "interact" with online ads.

It didn't happen. Hardly anybody clicked. [2]

With the advent of social media, the new gospel is about the "conversations" companies

are supposed to have with their clients. But not many clients seem interested. [3]

And even if they were, Facebook started charging companies for the privilege. [4]

[1] Ambler, Tim and Ann Hollier. *The Waste in Advertising Is the Part That Works*.

[2] Chaffey, Dave. *Average Display Advertising Clickthrough Rates*.

[3] Garfield, Bob and Doug Levy. *Can't Buy Me Like: How Authentic Customer Connections Drive Superior Results*.

[4] Baer, Jay. *This Chart Explains the Reachpocalypse and Why Facebook is Laughing All the Way to the Bank*.

# APPS

There's an app for that!

There's an app to help you become more productive, one to tell everything about yourself to everybody (hint: It's the one with the blue "f"), one to share photos, another one to chat and more still that track how many times you run, what you eat, how many times you go to the loo or have sex, what you read, what you like, what you should buy etc.

Once you realise you can't live without your phone and check it 150 times a day, you can download an app that helps you curb your dependence from your phone. [1]

And another one to help you find yourself and meditate. There's an app for everything.

Except for brewing coffee, unfortunately.

Hence the idea that everything can be solved with an app. Poverty? Political apathy? Lack of community? Obesity? There's an app for that!

Milan created *Not2 4get* to geo-localise your dear ones at municipal graveyards. [2]

Barcelona has 30 different apps. Perhaps it's time to admit we have gone too far. [3]

[1] Eyal, Nir. *Hooked: How to Build Habit-Forming Products*.

[2] The worst name ever for an app.

<https://appadvice.com/app/not2-4get/1049314604>

[3] Aplicacions municipals. [Ajuntament.barcelona.cat/apps/ca](http://Ajuntament.barcelona.cat/apps/ca)

# BIG DATA

Silicon Valley has successfully imposed their own storytelling on *Big Data*.

Do *Big Pharma*, *Big Food* or *Big Oil* make you think about huge companies whose interests are seldom aligned with your own? Not so with Big Data. Big Data seems neutral. [1]

And yet, we are witnessing the largest collection of personal data ever.

Billions of people are being spied on every day by hundreds of *Ad Tech* companies, starting with two of the world's largest companies, Google and Facebook.

High on optimism, we seem to think that it's worth it, and that data will solve all sorts of problems. What kind of problems? For example those politics should take care of.

When a 25 year-old dude who looked like the singer of punk rock band *Green Day* killed 12 people in a movie theatre in Colorado, what

did newspapers do? Did they campaign to make it harder to buy assault weapons than to buy a can of beer in a supermarket?

Neah. The venerable Wall Street Journal asked: “Can data mining stop the killing?” [2]

[1] Morozov, Evgeny. *The Internet Ideology: Why We Are Allowed to Hate Silicon Valley*.

[2] Jenkins, Holman. *Can Data Mining Stop the Killing?*



# BOB

On June 6, 1968, Robert Francis Kennedy was assassinated in Los Angeles.

Bob had been Attorney General and a key figure in his brother JFK's Administration, backing the Civil Rights Movement and the fight against organised crime.

November 22, 1963: President Kennedy was assassinated in Dallas. February 21, 1965: Malcolm X was assassinated in New York City.

On April 4, 1968, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was assassinated in Memphis. Robert Kennedy was campaigning in Indianapolis for the primaries of the Democratic party. He took to the streets and gave an impromptu speech, urging African Americans not to riot.

On June 5 he won the primaries in California, but was shot that night and died the day after.

A year earlier, Ronald Reagan, a former actor who was in favour of the war in Vietnam, had

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