

Death by Technology: The Road to Hell is Paved with Good Intentions

GGC Psychology Professor encourages People to think about how They use Tech

Editor's Note: we asked John "Ray" Cook to explain both the thinking that went into his book and the process of composing it.

Why did you write the book?

Arthur Clarke once said that, "any technology that is sufficiently advanced is indistinguishable from magic." Like, magic, many people seem to be impressed with technology for the very reason that they do not understand it. Despite this lack of understanding, there seems to be an overwhelming reliance upon technology and a belief that it will solve all the world's problems. This belief has become so entrenched that it is accepted without question at a level that is similar to religious devotion. This unthinking acceptance is dangerous and misplaced. Many of the very problems that plague humanity such as climate change, cyber theft, and the efficient murder of vast numbers in warfare are a direct result of technology that has had unforeseen consequences.

What do you hope people will take away from the book?

That there is also a downside to technological advance. It may manifest in the form of disjointed social relationships all the way to nuclear destruction. It is true that technology has brought many miraculous things to humanity. Technology has also be the means of our destruction unless we take a more critical look at technology rather than



John R. Cook

the current *zeitgeist* that suggests all good things come from technological development.

How long did the book take to write?

Three years, but things kept changing!

What were some of the issues?

The ever-changing landscape of the subject was one problem. Another was the sheer amount of information. It was difficult to decide what to keep and what to leave out. The original manuscript was almost 500 pages cut down to about 200 pages of text.

Were there any surprising synchronicities between classroom teaching and research?

Because of the technological overlay on all aspects of education, there was a constant feedback loop from the classroom to the effects described in the book. Some topics, such as the discussion of artificial intelligence, evolved out of a lecture in class.

Did the book thus come together with greater ease than expected?

The publication process, despite COVID, went rather smoothly. The publisher, McFarland, was an excellent company to work with, and they made the process relatively painless.

John R. Cook, *Death by Technology*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2021.

By Richard Rawls

