

ca. 1275
words

RISE

R.1

It is time to recognize that there is an epidemic in this nation & in our world hidden from view only by our complicity in a public blindness. It is time to move beyond our complacency & self-involvement & smug arrogance assuring us that this problem is not "our" problem to boldly begin a frank & honest discussion of a social illness that affects us all. It is time to rise above the rabid intimidation & bitter contention of our right to freedom of speech, a right constitutionally addressed at the founding of this country as a fundamental guarantee of religious & political thought, the expression of our individual voices & consciousness, NOT to allow for the proliferation & distribution of hatred & anger or racism & bigotry & masochism, NOT to enslave the mute & powerless masses bound by poverty or hunger or age or gender or lack of education & opportunity, NOT to enable the manipulation of political authority into despotism or the privilege of wealth & class to desecrate the socio-cultural fabric of our unity through diversity or to deny the strength we wield through each other's abilities by the pollution of our moral principles & our sense of honor & duty to ourselves, our children & our common humanity. It is time to acknowledge our cowardice & fear of confronting the darkness that lurks within the human soul to stand firm in our resolution to strive for something better, to identify

(R.2)

our wrongs + weaknesses + commit to a process of healing from within even if it requires struggle + pain + the bracing jolt of self-criticism or the frustration of compromise. We must work together as our ancestors have done before us to seek solutions + reinstall faith in a system of equality + balanced justice + shared values for all, from all, to ensure a future that includes all.

Our problem is not only one of failed policies + financial greed, nor of individual refusals to accept responsibility for one's choices + actions, nor even one solely the result of institutional morass + corporate depravity. Our problem is much more severe + insidious than that, for we have lost our way + abandoned our moral compass as a people. We need look no further than the single, most powerful influence humanity has ever known to see just how far we have wandered astray, that power being INFORMATION, its debasement + how it is distributed to the masses by a "tool" once promised to revolutionize + improve our lives, to make everything so much better + easier — the computer. I am well aware of the fact that I tread on holy ground by daring to question the functionality + usefulness of the computer, + more specifically the Internet, the wonder + freedom of mind + spirit perceived + the instantaneous access to a world of knowledge,

of human advances in science + medicine, art + culture, politics, journalism, education, world economics + global development + so much more that once resided far beyond our reach. But perhaps there was a reason, a benefit we fail to see that presupposes technology + financial + social connectivity for the stability of the passage of time, regular + linear, for the conscious deliberation of thought, the requirement of studied debate + the sober understanding of consequence + responsibility. Perhaps immediacy has failed us + connectivity has deluded us into thinking that what occurs on a computer screen is somehow less "real," more of a game + thus disconnected from the destruction as well as the good it can cause for others because we don't FEEL it, we only witness it, + watch it.

It is a fallacy to assume the computer is not personal, rather faceless + anonymous if we so choose. Yet it can unleash horrible things. It can lie + slander, it can label + denigrate, it can mislead + devastate. It can punish the innocent, it can incite violence + revolution, it can show us rape + beheadings + the atrocities of war. It can spew obscenities + pornography + remain blameless, it can ostracize + condemn + sow the seeds of division + heresy, it can teach hatred + poison our children just as easily as

improve their understanding of "other" + nurture their capacity to celebrate difference + embrace the good in all people. But be wary, as it opens the doorway to evil + can become uncontrollable. It is limited only by the depths of our deviance or the ambitions of our better nature. And history has proven that those individuals dedicated to the abuse of power, to oppression + tyranny, are rarely encouraged to listen to their conscience or persuaded by the better nature of their brothers + sisters in humanity. They are cruel + uncaring, despotic, maniacally ill, + in their hands technology is transformed into a weapon, not utilized as an instrument for good. Given instant access to the world, their evil spreads with astonishing rapidity + can confuse + cajol + corrupt a weak mind or a lost soul. The power which rests in the palm of your hand or on the table in front of you is more potentially harmful than any weapon previously in existence + it is mindbogglingly unregulated + accessible to those with the knowledge to subvert it for their own purposes. It watches you, tracks you, listens to you, identifies + catalogs your thoughts + desires, gives you all you ask for at the touch of your fingertips both for capitalistic profit + government control.

But we the People do not control it. Most do not even know how it works, only that it is there

like some genie in a magic lantern + we need only rub it + wish for something + PRESTO, there it is on the screen beckoning to us like a siren of the seas luring ships onto the rocks. We have become a society of ever more broken + divided people as a result, our patience + understanding + human decency foundered on the ragged edges of the shores of technological advance, a power we do not fully comprehend yet drown ourselves in every day as we attempt to satiate our voyeuristic passions at the expense of our privacy + our personal freedoms. We watch others live + in the process withdraw from active participation in our own lives. We are mesmerized by the very devices we once were told would give us MORE time, + the freedom to pursue our dreams. Let us not forget - Big Brother is watching us as we naively surrender our rights + dignity for the shiny bauble dangling in front of our faces, the glowing orbs of Google + Youtube + Twitter + Facebook that adorn our lives like so many sparkling decorations on a Christmas tree but without a soul + devoid of any moral obligation or sense of shame. BEWARE! There are malevolent ones skulking in the shadows of the Net, hiding behind the 1st Amendment + baiting us with the promise of freedom of information, the keys to the kingdom of knowledge + the temples of thought. We must be vigilant,

we must be cautious, above all, we must ALWAYS question authority. The time for social awareness is now, the time to uncover our eyes & examine closely all those in positions of power has never been more critical, the time to rise as one & demand answers from our world, our nation & our leaders can be delayed no longer. Truth is at risk & the future of our lives hangs in the balance. We must ask only one question — who controls the truth?

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