

Too Something.

November Aftermath – 2016

Updated February 2019

Something's not working. Like fledglings perched on a limb ready to take flight, these installments have remained perched out in the *Big www* wastland for well over a year and have yet to take off. I finally accepted that to simply wait for some breeze to come along and sweep them away wasn't gonna work. So, I sent out 15 letters asking for liftoff help. Several letters went to high-profile connected others who I was just sure were as passionate about the future as I am; some went to a few of the authors I highlighted in this series, and some asking's went to a few publications. And while several letters came back undelivered and some likely never reached their destination, it became evident that several were received as the hit counts then spiked. But in all asking's, not one offering to help came back. Discouraged, my mini fan club; a handful of great friends who don't even *Facebook* so other than encouragement, advice is all the help they can offer where here—they advised me to quit whining about 15 no-responses as 15 wasn't even a scratching. And when spammers invaded *Dancing Partners* via the forum last spring and I couldn't figure how to kick them out, I disconnected it. The given advice here—leave it disconnected; it was just too intimidating anyway. And, therein lies the rub. It's humbling, but it's time I face was else just might be—*too something*.

Dancing Partners, Kirkus Reviews, October 2016.

A somber warning about the dire problems caused by unchecked technology.

Contemporary discussions about technology's sociological impact are often critical but rarely ominous. Relatively few writers have interpreted the breakneck pace of advancement as a challenge to our very humanity. Debut author Publius, however, cautions that such progress brings more power to ruling elites at the expense of others. First, the book highlights the unprecedented expansion of computer-assisted power to scrutinize every aspect of our lives. This is *seen* usually *seen* in the field of marketing, in which our activity as consumers is thoroughly inspected, but Publius asserts that it also extends to all other human behavior. Second, the author notes that progress in the fields of automation and artificial intelligence threaten certain types of laborers with outright replacement; soon, Publius says, a whole host of occupations will be staffed by robots. This challenges the very existence of the middle class, which has been historically dependent upon a surfeit of low-skilled employment. Moreover, the author says, it's not only vanishing jobs that are at issue, but also the implications of living among intelligent beings who aren't people—a condition that, at the very least, raises urgent questions about what it means to be a human being.

Publius is best when addressing the constituent elements of human dignity and the ways in which alternative forms of intelligence may undermine the unique moral value of human existence. Also, the book offers a searching discussion of the nature of human consciousness, which involves purposefulness, emotion, and even faith, rather than simply efficient computation. Unfortunately, these provocative explorations are often undermined by breathless hyperbole, such as, "Really then, it's just a matter of time and a mere flip of some switch, before this bad-to-the-bone one becomes—tomorrow's diabolical nightmare." Many sentences are boldfaced for emphasis, and it's not unusual for an assertion to be punctuated with a concluding "dammit!" It's a shame that the book's prevailing tone of shrill alarmism will turn off many readers, who might then miss the book's many thoughtful philosophical insights.

A smart but often strident look at the trouble that technological progress might portend.

Too Much.

For those who don't need a good dose of prodding to engage; to raise awareness by speaking out about the road we are currently on—*the one headed straight to Transcendence unleashed and the days of Superintelligence*, I owe you the sincerest of

apologies if my strident tone offended your sensibilities. During this winter, I will endeavor to lessen my boldfaced emphasizing, take out a few dammits, and tone down the shrill alarmism. Too much is something I've often been accused of so I guess it's no surprise to find this wearisome trait found its way into my writing. My disclaimer; I was trying to emulate Dan Brown's didactic forcefulness!

With the election now in the rearview, with my paid-for Kirkus Review now in the forefront, it seems apt to spend a bit of time reflecting on opinions.

Who's Opinion Matters Anyway?

Ours. At least every 4th November and obviously—we still want change. Well, it's gonna take a bit of adjusting for me to accept how change would come packaged! Meanwhile, I've been thinking about how we got to such a divisive political meltdown in the first place. Sure, by the time the dust settles each 4th November, I'm sick of the whole gambit too; eager for the holidays to redirect my attention too, it's just that some observations are worth remembering come January and one is about whose opinion matters *before* that fateful November comes 'round yet again.

News media is rife with polled numbers. Currently, we are watching a whole lotta head scratching coming out of the commentation arena and what's got them itching stems from how their prediction numbers went awry. This is the 1st observation worth remembering. All quantified data from every demographic slice of every race, age, creed, income and educated levels of both genders living in every state; particularly swing states, can be likened to a mountainous watershed. News outlets can be likened to the fishermen hoping to net from this vast pool—the big one: *the accurate prediction of what we really think*. The head scratching is cuz the big one slipped away and they can't figure out how which has me wondering why we are being inundated with such an unabashed take on this. Is it truly their job to predict what it is we are thinking?

After-the-fact reality helps in the shoulda and coulda department for future races; Hillary shoulda campaigned in Wisconsin and shored up the female vote in Florida and Trump coulda reeled-in his tirades. But it's definitely noteworthy for us—to thoroughly consider whose purpose it serves to predict what we think *before* an election!

Opinion Tweaking.

A relatively new headwater contributing to this mountainous watershed of quantifiable data is also worth consideration because next time—*this tributary will play an even headier role in tweaking our opinion*. It's a watershed that flows from those living virally connected lives. So, whether it's a poll about how many of us think cats make better pets than dogs, to who we think will make a better president, this freely offered data; gleaned from online surveys, chat lines, postings, tweets, you name it, comes first from the very select headwaters of those who spend hefty chunks of their life online which makes what the bulk of us think—*not accurate*. How much of this contributed to the head scratching now going on? Don't know but I found a year-old post from *Pew Research* breaking down whose opinion makes up this newday watershed.

www.pewresearch.org "Overall, 73% of Americans go online on a daily basis. Along with the 21% who go online almost constantly, 42% go online several times a day and 10% go online about once a day. Some 13% go online several times a week or less often. And in this survey, 13% of adults say they do not use the internet at all." **www.statista.com says Americans now use electronic media 11hrs a day.

From the numbers out of this fountain, it's not much of a stretch to conclude that by large, the 21% living fully connected are *the whose* conveying what the bulk of us think, which, the Pew article goes on to say that demographic slice consists mostly of teens and young adults. Hardly, can this accurately convey what the average voter thinks but just to add a bit of accuracy to that stretch, I conducted my own polling. I've yet to find even one person who's ever filled out an online survey, someone who's ever spent even one hour blogging, chatting or posting other than Facebooking family/friends on personal matters but seldom about politics, (except to share political satire of course) and I've yet to come across even one person who has ever once—tweeted! And yes, I polled more than my mini fan club. To be fair though, my polling is also grossly skewed right from the start since the demographic slice I drew from was of the working class who simply can't spend, even if we actually wanted to—*11hrs of our time allotment online as we must spend most of that chunk just humping to pay the bills!*

Obviously, I'm no big fan of the skewed means to glean what we think so it's with a large dose of irony that I find myself writing about polled tallies. But, there was one poll leading into the election worth mentioning and it was about our satisfaction in who we got to vote for. *Our satisfaction hovered around an all-time low at 25%*. So of those actually voting: a mere 25% eagerly hoped each of their chosen candidate would win which left a bulky 50% of us who would dutifully, not eagerly—attend to our democratic responsibility. Even with a wide inaccuracy margin taken into account, this is one poll worth remembering. In fact, it holds the one silver lining to—*what we really think*.

Silver Lining.

Regardless of whether Trump's 100 day fix-all plan materializes, even in 2 years, I'm certain by then that our misgivings about his qualifications to hold our highest office will either be eased or proven valid. Either way, in two flyby years—a pummeling to tweak our opinion will again begin. The silver lining: *the bulk of us aren't very happy right now*. This means that even if by blind luck: ***we have a clear consensus building!*** That Trump won the electoral vote and Hillary won the popular vote punctuates this. So while the far left and right continue to polarize, this 50% bulk-marker indicates the rest of us are a more closely aligned middle which makes this poll worth locking in our memory bank!

The American mindset is moving towards consensus-cohesion; most of us no longer see ourselves as republicans or democrats regardless of how we register. On the homepage of The Centrist Party, www.uscentrist.org, they state: "America is 70% Centrist. So why are letting 15% from the left and 15% from the right control our nation? We need to support Independent and Centrist candidates, or risk losing another election to special interests." And I, damn well agree. But how? After all, the only notable challenge in breaking our country free from this 2-party gridlock was in the early 90's when Ross Perot ran as an Independent. And, there are plenty of other choices. As of May 2018, www.ballotpedia.org says there's about 32 distinct ballot-qualified parties and about 230 state-level parties registered in the U.S.

With so many choices; some with off-putting platform names even, maybe this confounds our ability to move another party forward and break from this 2-fork stranglehold. The Libertarian Party is the 3rd largest party but lags substantially behind our 2 primary parties. Maybe this is due to their platform or even simply their tag but regardless, all other platforms lag even more but that doesn't mean they don't exist. Before the next election round, I will definitely reach out to centrist outlets because eventually—something's gotta give.

The Mission.

I believe people spend time discussing and cussing big picture steering because we want our opinion to matter. A sense of empowerment underlies opinion-sharing; a means of dissipating senses of hopelessness. Sure, our opinion damn well matters but when it's only accurately tallied every 4th November, there's a whole lotta lag time in-between empowerment fixes.

Most of us don't live viral lives but even if we were willing to blog our way to consensus-building, we currently have no bipartisan platform where that kind of time investment would actually make a difference. I know. I spent a hefty chunk of time during 2012 searching for that kind of outlet and in doing so, I learned a few things. For starters, whether you stumble across a professed bipartisan platform or not, all chat strings and forums where big picture steering is discussed, function as outlets where people go to blow off steam. Opinions on topics are usually smartly derived and debated—then forgotten. Participation again builds in the next hot topic room and nothing concrete gets accomplished—consensus never gets built.

I mentioned this exasperation in a forum one day and the given response was that fluidness is preferred; that to *stick* topics for building consensus—wasn't. So, after making a solid commitment to participate in every forum and chat string I found, I too moved on. Aimlessly rushing from one hot topic defugilty or atrocity onto the next started coming with a stagnating feel. I rationed that even for those not participating in chat rooms much less groping their way on a mission towards consensus-building, whatever current-event outlet we lend our focus to: *it is being inundated with every dreariness imaginable and must surely be tripping up our cumulative, now worldly, human psyche.*

By the end of 2012, I better understood why hopelessness prevails. From a commoner's perspective; it's useless to think we can impact change because the dynamics in Washington have become so convoluted, our unified voice becomes just another annoyance to maneuver around. I began to see that to overcome such stagnation, we'd need to stretch empowerment fixes into something more lasting. So, I built a forum.

The Pearl Jam forum; the one I felt most comfortable in and learned a good deal in, was built upon an open source format so I figured forum-erecting upon something readily available shouldn't be that difficult. Finally, after yet another year of hair-pulling internet exasperations, I stumbled onto a programmer actually capable of delivering what I wanted and by the time 2013 rolled into the rearview, I closed shop on all internet tentacles. I now snail-mail my asking's whenever that's an option and when someone kids me for still not updating my pocket phone, it reels me back to my 2012/2013 networking nightmares and leaves me flushed with the heebie-jeebies. So if you are wondering why I keep subjecting myself to it all, well, I keep telling myself to just buck-up but—I'm getting less and less inclined.

Middle ground consensus-building is critical and regardless of my aversion, social networking holds the ticket. The functions I had built into the *Dancing Partner Forum* holds the one key I never did find in all my forays; the consensus-building key where opinions on big picture steering *stick*—for lasting empowerment. I will keep subjecting myself to this damn disseminating maze until these fledglings finally land in the laps of those who are also passionate about the kind of future we leave our kids. Then, I'll go and fetch the forum back from where it now sits lonely—somewhere out in the clouds.

Stumbling Blocks.

Trust. At least I know the trust-factor contributes to the stalled takeoff of this series. Well, since the very heart of this mission is to unify our opinion so we can actually effect change, then just consider how you would opt to enact such boldness. I went for anonymity. Nope, didn't foresee it would become a liftoff deterrent but still, I truly believe it best provides the full canvas for a unified face painting to emerge from and that beats the hell out of a mugshot of one. Besides, I'm not all that good looking. Sure, there's a few selfish reasons why I hide behind a pen name and obscurity is one. I like it. I'm also old enough now to know that any measure of fame will always rank below precious solitude and that's one concept I'd bet every famous, aged person can appreciate.

We've become a cynical bunch for good reason but if we want our voice to resonate, we've got to begin by trusting ourselves—somewhere. Obviously, this series is flawed—like me, but I prefer to think of it as perfectly flawed—like we all are. Like you, I too hold trust as a fundamental measure of integrity and though I haven't given you my vitals, I've given you a damn long series built upon integrity—deserving of your trust.

Sleazy Opportunists. They are a dime a dozen and they are why we've become so cynical but like it or not, it's a given that in a democracy running on capitalism, public opinion matters in every matter so it's not shrill alarmism to point out that if we don't quickly trust someplace in which to resonate consensus from, then soon, every site will come armed with the ability to expand our social networking voice towards empowerment—for *any agenda*.

From wherever any item gets purchased, from wherever any news-chunk gets delivered, all viral sites now encourage us to leave comments. Comments then tallied; via chat strings, likes or dislikes, thumbs up or down, are but preliminary tallying functions. One doesn't need saddled with a paranoid mind to know that ever-evolving tallied databases will provide evermore opinion-tweaking fodder where in big picture steering arenas—dime a dozen opportunists flourish. What's currently happening in Washington absolutely showcases the prudence of why we must quickly safekeep: *what our bipartisan consensus truly is, for whichever policy we can actually get behind, accurately tallied from a worthy platform—built by us*. And, built by us is crucial. We carry a mega dose of skepticism around for good reason.

Think *Wikipedia*; a platform where most of us have come to trust the data provided. It wasn't built from one and it isn't policed by a mere few but rather, it's an open-source built from all for all. Similarly, we must quickly erect a trustworthy consensus-building platform *before* we become inundated with so many Wikipedia-type sites clamoring for our trust—we become trusting of none. Our sanity-saving reaction to viral onslaughts is already well-understood. We tune-out. And, therein lies my greatest concern and why I keep plugging away at such boldness. We must quickly lock our unified voice safely into place before Superintelligence arrives in full regalia and to point this out isn't shrill alarmism either but mere common sense—based upon historically proven fact.

Review of the Reviewer.

Certain I'd overlooked the one aspect I just knew my endeavor would get noted for, I re-read the *Kirkus Review* several times looking to find the words: *well-researched or well-supported*. When I found I didn't miss what wasn't there, I had to accept that I managed to draw the same person-type I'd hoped to avoid drawing when I went

searching for an editor; the primary reason I opted for a reviewer's opinion before giving my endeavor over to the gifted hands of an editor.

If I tallied all the opinions I've gathered from all the years I've spent striking up conversations about technology and Superintelligence, the overriding result would be: ***the majority of us aren't willing to accept the Godsend of our era comes with a few dark sides.*** *Dancing Partners* bloated because of this. It became an awareness-raising mission because of this and complacency was hammered on from some varying angle throughout the entire series because of it and why I am guilty of a too much in-your-face delivery. Again, I apologize but please buck-up. Did I actually type that?

Hiring a reviewer instead of an editor was simply because those most disinclined to loosen their blinders about this Godsend just happen to be those most likely holding down editing seats. Now why I didn't make this same connection to reviewers I don't know. Like I said, I'm not perfect but rather—perfectly flawed. Simply put, I didn't want, I still don't want, this series polished and softened into yet another techno-take that leaves the reader pondering on a few philosophical insights for a night—*forgotten the next day*. The idea of a review first was to steel myself against caving into some nice-n-easy dilution.

For years now, I've read every techno book I've come across which is why I know we've already been given a slew of already forgotten, techno-takes. So when I was ambushed by that unshakable need to share my learning's, I decided that if I was going to invest the kind of time this endeavor required, then I damn sure wasn't gonna use kid gloves just so all my efforts would gently slide from a reader's hands into the annals of easily forgotten! My notion of plainspeak delivery encompassed the need for a bit of prodding in order to get the bulk of us to face the dark sides of technology. Certain we've had our fill of politically correct nice-n-easy, I rationed that a more tangible delivery would be accepted; a kind of rawness that just might prevent my painstaking efforts from landing in the tinder box.

After re-reading my review, I sat there thinking about all the years of mind-numbing hours I spent in researching and laboring to accurately present quoted facts and theories from experts like Kurzweil, Baker, Kass, Minsky, Bostrom, Joy, Pistono and Searle. I thought about the many more books and articles I researched and typed to support this mission and I realized that my reviewer could not have possibly missed all my painstaking efforts. Why then, did (he?) undermine my full-on rally mission as though it was nothing more than some debut break into the writing world? Why did he dismiss my factual research as nothing more than what Publius asserts or says? Was he up against a time constraint, unable to research/confirm given data as accurate? Maybe speed-reading is the only way a reviewer can make a living which would account for the several off-mark observations and his doubled-up typo. Maybe, he was up against a word-count constraint; unable to fit-in the precious line of *well-researched* but if that's the case then easily, he could have minimized his shrill alarmism diatribe where 38 words were used to twist George's Bad-to-the-Bone song into nothing but breathless hyperbole!

I was relieved to read the reviewer liked something about *Dancing Partners* and I especially appreciate the kudos given for the humanism aspect as I was quite pensive about being able to connect what it means to be human. Overall, I appreciate the review. It's the reviewer's intent that earned him a review of his own.

My intent has been clear from the get-go. I wrote expressly to help loosen our blinders to what *Existential Risk* utterly means and to the chagrin of my reviewer, *Existential Risk* isn't a phrase Publius made up but rather, it's a phrase used by experts

in charge of giving measure to risks capable of impacting our very existence where here, Superintelligence comes in at the very tiptop. But, it was the reviewer's final line; the one writers typically get to use for soundbite promotions, which confirmed for me that his intent was clouded by an affinity for his beloved technology. "*A smart but often strident look at the trouble that technological progress might portend.*" Might? I'd bet the experts who dedicated their life to all-things techno—***the ones I painstakingly quoted***—will also take great exception to prefacing portend with might!

By reading the *Kirkus Review*, and this series, you will come away with the potential of two diverse reactions: either you will be turned off by the prevailing tone of shrill alarmism and discard it unfinished, or you will allow something from 13 damn long installments to compel you to strike up awareness-raising conversations and engage here. But, if you find yourself turned off that's okay; just accurately assess why and had the reviewer done this for himself, had he not cleverly undermined my ability to use the promotional last line; a \$500 price tag undermining, then I wouldn't be envisioning a cinched-down, blinder-wearing poster-mugshot look for his pinched face!

I've done the homework; it's well-researched, it's thought-provoking and it's factual: *the machine versus man era is here in full swing*. Maybe we don't feel like our opinion much matters in Washington but in the techno-arena, if we decide *together* which developments we will support and which must be deterred, then our opinion will sure matter there! And if the bulk of us will do this; a bulk that begins boldly—one at a time, where at *Dancing Partners* individual opinions will indeed matter, then this doesn't have to be a miserable undertaking which is why I tried injecting wit into this endeavor so I'll be leaving in the Bad-to-the-Bone connection as it goes with the damn song! Did all the bit pieces of any cleverness I used—escape my reviewer?

Outstretched Hands.

After careful consideration over who might best help shine a spotlight on this series and thereby save me from the disseminating maze, I sent several more asking pleas in 2015; one to Bill Maher and another to the Pearl Jam gang. Then, when I didn't receive even a *thanks but no thanks*, I carefully considered who else—might best help. After procrastinating most of 2016 away, (I find this process rather distasteful) I finally sent pleas to *NPR, PBS, Charlie Rose, Wall Street Journal, Washington Post, The Guardian, The Christian Science Monitor, Politico and USA Today*. No response. I now figure most of the hits coming in at *Dancing Partners* are from those looking for an actual dance partner or those looking for the latest gossip on *Dancing with the Stars*; the consequences of not thinking this titling thing thru.

I'm stumped. Election aftermath 2016 has me thinking about opinions; who's matters, who's doesn't. I just can't believe my opinions are so off-mark they don't even warrant a common response courtesy; especially considering the very tempo of my writing came straight from years upon years of asking the opinions from a whole slew of others. Surely, I didn't carefully select a list of well-connected others holding opinions, in royal flush style, not aligned with ours. That I'm doing something wrong doesn't surprise me but that I must be doing it so horribly wrong—does.

What a flush, no-response indicates finally goaded me into forking up the bucks for a review. I figured if my mini fan club's *good-enough* assessment came backed-up by an *acceptable-enough* approval stamp, then I'd carry on with an editor to erase *enough* from good and acceptable. So, this army of one begins 2019 by seeking to find a few comrades highly skilled in the art of disseminating. Luckily, I'm at least well-skilled in the

art of perseverance so I know this series will eventually land in the laps of a few souls passionate about the future and wise enough to see the value in a good-enough message attempting to be delivered from the struggling, outstretched hands of a commoner.

To news outlets; I know you have a tough job—trying to snag our focus aint easy. I'm certain that trying to predict what we are thinking is far more interesting than reporting to us who wore what designer dress to which function but imagine how electric the news would again be if the bulk of us were more engaged; truly felt like our democratic voice actually mattered and more than just once every 4th November.

To all well-connected souls; this endeavor won't take off without your help. I discovered this when I discovered I have no stomach for army-of-one outlets. At *Facebook*, when my friend list became overran with gamer invites and homebodies providing minuet updates from laundry to litter box detail, I conceded. At *Twitter*; where my starter list came from my starter techie who I soon discovered was an undercover right wing fanatic as my tweet box quickly became infiltrated by a network of every right wing-nut out there, I conceded here too. All of my internetting forays have come with hard knock lessons. I am now over qualified to confirm: *it damn sure aint easy to reach the tuned-out, off-line, middle.*

My intent is genuine. We must think to the future—to our kids and grandkids. Quickly, we must come to understand one absolute: *technology adapts exceedingly fast. We don't.* Superintelligence won't just magically in some distant future poof-appear. With each ticking moment of right now, Superintelligence develops in such a manner that every advancement along its maturation becomes *entrenched and irreversible* making too late tomorrow just that. If we won't quickly move to be a part of the solution—we become part of the problem. And the problem? We bequeath to our own kids' one helluva nightmare and if that's hyperbole to you, please accurately assess why because hyperbole, like distrust, are nothing but handy scapegoats and it is Superintelligence, not Publius, that dictates it's high time we face this inconvenient truth without the kid gloves.

It is said that one measure which separates humans from the rest of the pack is that we comprehend mortality. If I failed to connect this mortal-knowing to Superintelligence with a tangible feel—it wasn't for lack of trying. I will strive to tone down my delivery in hopes of striking palatable before hitting forgotten but regardless of whether I succeed or not—the alarm still needs blared. Above all, forgive my prodding but humanity truly does need all of us to look to the future, now—with eyes wide open.

Sincerely yours, Publius