

Google Glass: obedience to the Matrix

by

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on

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It's now being suggested that Google Glass, the computers worn over the eyes, can be used to catch rogue stock traders before they wander off the reservation and destroy the firms they work for.

Google Glass records everything the wearer sees and says. So if all brokers are ordered to have them, their every move can be observed by company spies. Wonderful, right?

And if traders can be kept in line, how about bank tellers and nurses and teachers and gun shop owners and chefs and cab drivers and lifeguards and blackjack dealers and realtors and assembly-line workers and kindergarten kids? How about everybody?

This could be the new media. Put it all online. "Here's what happened at Wal-Mart today, as seen through the eyes of a checkout clerk."

Believe me, there are many people who would welcome Glass-security measures as a necessary innovation. Destroying freedom and privacy would be counted as "regrettable side effects."

Glass: One more move in the development of a complete android society.

In case you've been living on the moon, this evolution has been underway for a long, long time.

Here are some personal observations on this recent history...

The major media are proof there is life after death. But that life isn't pretty. Oh, it may be dressed to kill, but it isn't pretty.

I first became aware that television news was dead in 1974. I hadn't watched television for 15 years, and then, for some reason that probably had to do with my addiction to popcorn, I bought a small black and white set and arranged the antenna with, yes, aluminum foil, and set it up on a bureau in my small apartment in Los Angeles.

One night, I turned it on. I watched the news and munched popcorn.

I can't recall the newsmen, but I assume Cronkite, the man who had replaced George Washington as the father of our country, was front and center.

I tried various stations, national and local, for the news. I was sure I was looking at androids. The tones, the grins, the melting sincerity, the hectic elation, the droning "factual reports." America had gone mad.

The news had died completely, and I was watching animated corpses. I didn't think I was watching dead people. I knew I was.

How could anyone take this seriously? I expected half the screen to drop away and Laurel and Hardy or Salvador Dali to peek out and expose the ruse as a massive Disney-CIA operation.

After a few months of examining television news and other programming, I began to realize the plague of androids was moving from television to the populace. Or maybe it had started in big robotic corporations and then had been taken up by the news. Either way, it was a painted zombie.

Had I missed some mega-event in the country that killed off humans and replaced them with non-carbon substitutes?

Factually, of course, the news was getting worse. But I had known it was a con since the JFK assassination.

The anchors, though, and the reporters, the whole gang of "team news" people; where had they come from? Was there an underground base where they'd been operated on, to suck away active brain cells?

Was this all a consequence of the disintegration of language? Was it the result of a deep collective trauma (Vietnam?) that needed a bright shiny cover to induce amnesia? Was it merely a wholesale reflection of the advertising industry?

By 1982, when I began to work as a reporter, I had come to a provisional conclusion. America wanted to be a happy country. It was desperate to be happy. It felt it was entitled to be happy. It would do and say anything to be happy.

Even when horrible things happened, people wanted to smile. They wanted to live inside a short-

circuited universe. There were two states: happy and temporarily blank.

And then there was something else peeking in at the edge; mindless rage. That was no surprise. How could a nation feast on Happy, day in and day out, without going crazy?

Television news was a perfect template and advertisement for all this. You had car crashes and mangled bodies, storms wiping out towns, famines, murders, but you still had Giggle on the screen. That was the mandate.

The whole country, or at least the myth of the whole country, was inventing itself as a porn-tinged sitcom. I met a fair number of people who'd emigrated here on the premise that they'd find an amusement park Nirvana, and I asked them why that appealed to them in the first place.

I expected them to say it was because of horrible conditions in their home countries, but no, that wasn't the first answer I fielded. These people would point to shiny cars and apartment buildings and fast-food restaurants and even bowling alleys to make their self-evident declaration.

A cartoon of a cartoon of a cartoon. That's what was evolving. And now there was an innovation: at each new level of the dream, the original and lost emotional range was being reintroduced—sadness, grief, exasperation, fear, frustration, outrage, joy, excitement—but as synthetic substitutes.

It was as if a film director decided to throw in the kitchen sink on his latest project, but without a shred of insight. Just cook up an emotion and ladle it on. Pour it on the screen.

And this was being accepted, welcomed, heralded.

People were learning how to live and react and think and talk through the movies and television and advertising, as if they'd come from some unknown devastated place where the experience of life had been wiped out and a new kindergarten was called for.

And this was what the news was playing to. This was the audience.

Since movies are part of media, it brings me to an experience I had last weekend. I watched a piece of dreck called *Prometheus*, directed by Ridley Scott, who had once been alive when he made *Blade Runner*, but was now obviously dead.

He doesn't know he's dead, because he's still walking around, but he's been reanimated in some quite incredible way, his IQ sliced in half, to be generous.

This is supposed to be a movie about man's search for his maker, about the eternal questions. It's supposed to be about the engineering of the human race from a distant world. It's supposed to be a Deep examination of our abiding myths.

Instead, the high points of the drama are: a woman inseminated by alien fluid and rushing into a one-day pregnancy, at the end of which, with belly swelling like a marshmallow, she gives birth to a squiggly squid; a large explosion in a cave; an underground labyrinth turning out to be a giant spaceship; and one of the engineers (?) of our race, a rubbery-white Adonis with a fixed introspective face out of a mortuary, turning on a bunch of lights to make the alien ship come alive. There is also a heroine hanging from a ledge by her fingers.

That's it. The critics lauded the sets. The sets were perhaps one cut above an original *Star Trek* studio cardboard layout.

Ridley Scott, the man who gave us the only noir science-fiction movie worth watching, *Blade Runner*, has gone into waking slumber.

At the end of *Prometheus*, the heroine doctor takes off with the mantelpiece head, just the head, of a highly intelligent android, to search for the home world of the Engineers who made us, paving

the way for a sequel.

Like so many blockbusters these days, the elements of Prometheus are lifted from older movies which in turn are derived from still crustier movies, and not in a good way. With each new generation, the plot lines are shrinking, the lead-ins to the big money scenes (explosions, decapitations, aliens appearing) are shorter, as if to say: who cares, we know why you're in the theater, you want the payoffs so here they are.

A great deal has been written about sci-fi disaster movies as predictive programming; the audience is being prepared for real-life monster false-flag operations, leading to greater government clamp-downs on freedom.

Well, I think the more important programming is in the area of behavior—as in, operant conditioning. "This is the way to think and behave."

Be not-human. Imitate the characters in these movies. Be rigid, effective, shallow, mindless. It's the latest cartoon of life.

Google Glass is a perfect extension of all this. Wear these special glasses and gain new powers. Access the Cloud in a microsecond. Step up your efficiency quotient. Merge with Glass. Experience androidal existence at a new level. Your own mind and imagination are minor qualities. What you really want is a ticket to miles and miles of useful information and you want it now, wherever you are, whatever you're doing.

You need directions? Here they are. You need cues to improve your real-time social interactions? Here they are. You need to record the people in your vicinity, so you can play it all back later and see how you could have maximized those eight minutes in the conference room? Here it is.

Wear Glass and merge with Glass. You'll be an unstoppable one-two punch. You'll amaze your associates. You'll be the first person on your block to own a Friend who guides your actions.

Because, make no mistake about it, the next step in Glass is anticipation. The machine will know what you want before you do, and it will give it to you, right in front of your eyes. Why wait? That's old-school. Glass already has the answer before you ask the question. It's more efficient that way.

Talk about conditioning. It will take and make a profile of You. Then it will know what to deliver and when. The profile will rub away your rough edges. It'll delete your complexities. It'll remake you as a streamlined pseudo-human and fulfill the needs of the imitation-you.

Eventually, you'll catch on. You'll enact the suggestions and demands of Glass before it passes them on to you. You'll be entrained. At that point, Glass will re-form a better profile, based on your new reaction-time.

You and the machine together, in an enclosed meth-like bubble, moving and acting faster and faster to gain an edge.

They could, at that point, put you on an assembly line with all the other robots and you would perform admirably. And you might well want that, to test yourself against complete unthinking machines, to gauge your progress.

In fact, society itself will have moved light years beyond current androidal archetypes: delete all unnecessary action and thought. Do away with interior reflection. Blunt imagination down to a nub. Find the fastest route from A to Z and effect it.

You'll want to watch a movie, and the holographic experience will be yours. It'll last a few seconds. Through the latest version of Glass, you'll be flooded with a download of basic sensation-essence. That will be the movie. You won't even remember what you saw, but you'll know it in some neurological compartment, and with Glass, you'll be able to discuss it with your friends.



The world will be your stand-alone object of affection, no matter what events are occurring beyond your need to comprehend them. Glass will assess that need-to-know and wall you off from the inessentials, and you will assent and agree and comply. Willingly.

Looking back on today's world, you'll see an attenuated Dickens story line of no importance at all. How could those people have stood for the interruptions, the postponements, the false trails, the dead-ends?

How could they have put up with the dreary elongated social interactions? How could they have accepted the tonnage of irrelevant information?

How much better to tune up the nervous system to a form of predictive programming, whereby you not only get to the airport in record time, but you are the airport and the plane and the flight before they even happen.

It's the fabled Zen merge. If you're a tooled apparatus.

And somewhere in an underground NORAD-like bunker, a technician will be making a report: "Sir, we've boiled down the human species to 1,234,727 profiles or roles. Our information systems do an eval on the 18 billion inhabitants of planet Earth, assess parameters and habits of each person, and basically assign them, through Glass, the applicable profile. From that point on, every suggestion, advice, datum, and prediction funneled through Glass to the user will fall within the shape of the role/profile fitted to him. Our surveys indicate that, on the whole, this escalation will operate smoothly... people want it. They welcome it..."